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Jean Racine.

Gravé par J. Drouillet, d'après le portrait de M. de la Haye.

THE DRAMATIC WORKS
OF
JEAN RACINE

A METRICAL ENGLISH VERSION

BY

ROBERT BRUCE BOSWELL

M.A. OXON.

AUTHOR OF "METRICAL TRANSLATIONS AND OTHER POEMS"

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BIOGRAPHICAL NOTICE.

THE reign of Louis XIV. in France, like the age of Pericles at ancient Athens, was remarkable for literary excellence no less than for military achievements. In dramatic poetry the names of Corneille, Molière, and Racine are not unworthy of comparison with those of Sophocles, Aristophanes, and Euripides. Like Euripides, Racine confined himself almost exclusively to tragedy; but as the former has left one Satyric drama,—“the Cyclops,”—as evidence of his capacity for sustained humour, so the latter has given us “Les Plaideurs,” as his sole contribution to the Comic Muse. In their distinguishing characteristics as authors, the two poets have points of resemblance. In both alike tenderness and sweetness are more conspicuous than sublimity and force. In each writer there is a *curiosa felicitas* of language that confers the stamp of originality upon the style rather than on the thoughts, which would often appear tame and commonplace if expressed in less fittingly chosen terms. This feature renders the task of a translator an especially difficult one, and demands the constant indulgence of a reader who has learned to appreciate those graces of diction which no foreign language can precisely imitate. In Racine, as in Euripides, the play of contending emotions is more prominently presented than sensational incidents of horror and bloodshed; and another common trait is the analytical and argumentative vein which occupies so large a space as often to tax the patience of the reader; and still

more of the spectator who requires the constant stimulus of brisk and sparkling dialogue.

Racine's strict adherence to the unities of action, time, and place, as prescribed by Aristotle and enforced by the critical authority of Boileau,¹ is felt by an Englishman, accustomed to the unlicensed freedom of our own Elizabethan dramatists, as a needless restriction, which tends to render the action monotonous. But this, if it is to be regarded as a defect, is one from which the French stage has been slow to emancipate itself; and the genius of Racine was of such a kind as to conform itself to such shackles *con amore*, far more so than that of Corneille or Voltaire. The simplicity of plot in most of Racine's plays enables him to exert his peculiar excellence, the skill with which he can by constantly shifting the point of view introduce a succession of novel effects with few materials. Not but that this simplicity is in some cases carried too far for a drama intended for representation on the stage; as, for instance, in "*Bérénice*," where the changes are rung with wearisome iteration on the varying tones of disappointed love; whereas the tangled web of passion in such a play as "*Andromaque*" gives much greater scope for sustaining the attention with growing interest to the end.

Born on or about December 21st, 1639, at the little town of La Ferté-Milon, about equidistant from Meaux and Reims, Jean Racine was the son of a minor government official, who was charged with the collection of the salt tax, a position which gave him some degree of importance in the poet's native place. His family were well connected, and the ancestral arms were a rebus of a rat and a swan (rat-cygne). He was his father's only son, and bore his

¹ As understood by the classical school of French dramatists, these rules prescribe observance of the following conditions: 1. Unity of action, or the predominance of one main plot. 2. Unity of time, which limits the action to the course of a single day. 3. Unity of place.

name. He had but one sister, Marie, about a year younger than himself. The two children were left orphans when Jean was only four years of age, and though they had a step-mother, she does not appear to have taken any interest in their subsequent fortunes. The brother and sister were adopted by their parents' families, Jean finding a home with his paternal grandfather, while their mother's father took care of little Marie. His grandfather died when Jean was only ten; but his grandmother, Marie des Moulins, continued to treat him as a son, and a tender attachment existed between them, as is shown by his correspondence with his sister, until her death in 1663, when he had already appeared before the world as a poet and dramatist.

He received his earliest education at the college, or grammar school, of Beauvais, leaving it at the age of sixteen for one of the three rural branches of the famous abbey of Port Royal, where he remained from 1655 till 1658. The Port Royalists are closely associated with the poet's subsequent career, and the religious influences which were then brought to bear upon his youthful mind were destined to assert themselves in later life in a way that, combined with disappointment and chagrin, changed him from a man of pleasure and fashion into a conscientious devotee; and the author of "Esther" and "Athalie" undoubtedly owed much to the pious "Solitaires" under whose charge he passed the most impressionable years of life. But at the time the ardent and imaginative youth chafed against the austere spirit that prevailed at the "Petites Ecoles" of Port Royal; and the somewhat narrow-minded strictness of their regulations long rankled in his bosom, and eventually found expression in a savage tirade against his old instructors, of which further mention will have to be made. A single incident will be sufficient to show both the zealous discipline to which he was subjected, and the

determined spirit with which he resented opposition to his favourite tastes. A Greek romance, written in the fourth century of the Christian era, by a future Bishop of the Church, the "Æthiopica" of Heliodorus, having fallen into his hands, he was perusing it with the utmost avidity, when one of his masters, Claude Lancelot, snatched the volume from his hands, and threw it into the fire. The blameless adventures of Theagenes and Chariclea scarcely deserved such violent treatment, but the worthy man no doubt acted up to his light, and the mere name of a love story was probably quite enough to make him deem it pernicious. Young Racine's curiosity, however, was not to be so easily balked, and he managed to procure another copy. This too was confiscated by the zealous *magister morum*, and followed the fate of its predecessor. But the lad was more than a match for his tutor, and, recovering the forbidden treasure a third time, made himself master of its contents, and is even said to have learned them by heart. Then with triumphant impertinence he presented the book to Lancelot, saying: "You may burn this, as you have done the others." The tale was one that lingered affectionately in his remembrance, and he was at one time intending to make it the subject of a play, as was actually done by Dorat about a hundred years afterwards. There are other stories told of him at this time which show that his memory was as retentive as his imagination was alert. Greek poetry was more to his taste than theological disquisitions, and he gave his good preceptors much anxiety and distress by the zest with which he devoured the Athenian dramatists, as contrasted with his disinclination for pious instruction. Sophocles and Euripides were his favourite authors. He could repeat large portions of their plays, and they were his chosen companions when he wandered through the woods, or buried himself in their deepest solitudes. He made copious notes in the margins of his

pocket volumes, and essayed poetical compositions of his own on similar themes, a frivolous and dangerous amusement which, when discovered, drew down upon him the censure of the authorities, and, as a punishment, it was thought advisable to turn his gift to religious uses by setting him the task of translating the Latin hymns of his Breviary into French verse, an occupation to which he returned in the closing years of his life.

He left the Port Royalists before he was nineteen, and proceeded to Paris, in order to study philosophy and logic at the Collège d'Harcourt. But he appears to have devoted himself with more ardour to sociability and pleasure, with gay companions like the Abbé Le Vasseur and La Fontaine, to whom in his letters, and no doubt in his conversation at this period, he loved to mimic the pious phraseology of his former instructors. He was boarded with his cousin, Nicolas Vitard, who was steward to the Duc de Luyne; and Racine himself, at a later time, formed one of that nobleman's household. In an amusing letter written to Le Vasseur from Chevreuse, near Versailles, he deplores his absence from Paris as an exile in Babylon, and describes his uncongenial duties in superintending the alterations at the Duke's château, which he varied by frequent visits to the neighbouring tavern, and by reading and writing poetry, with a *souçon* of romantic adventure in connection with a lady who, as he enigmatically remarks, "mistook me yesterday for a bailiff." In 1660 he made an unsuccessful attempt to get a play of his put upon the stage, which bore the title of "Amasie," and another was at least taken in hand, if not completed. These efforts led him into the society of actors and actresses, and his friends of Port Royal grew more and more uneasy as to his manner of life. An ode that he wrote about this time in honour of the king's marriage with the Infanta Maria Theresa brought him the substantial reward of a hundred

Louis d'or. He entitled this effusion "*La Nymphe de la Seine.*" He had now given up all thoughts of his original destination, the legal profession, but was induced, in 1661, to prepare himself for holy orders at Uzès in Languedoc, with his maternal uncle, Père Sconin, who was willing to resign to him, when qualified, the benefice that he himself held, if there should be none other available. Racine remained at Uzès for a year and more, studying theology, but with his heart still devoted to the Muses, as is shown by his critical remarks upon Pindar and Homer, which he wrote while there. The clerical life was not one to which Racine's temperament, at least at this time, was at all adapted, and it was probably his sense of this incompatibility, as much as the difficulties which presented themselves in obtaining a satisfactory living, that determined his abandonment of a scheme which he had been led to adopt under strong pressure from without. He was, indeed, instituted prior of Epinay, but this was an office which could be held by a layman; and when it involved him in a lawsuit which threatened to be interminable, he did not care to retain it long after finding his true vocation as a dramatic author.

In 1663 Racine was once more in Paris, and made the acquaintance of Molière and Boileau. His friendship with the latter remained unbroken through life; but the former's kindness was repaid with a discourteous ingratitude which was unpardonable, and is, unfortunately, not the only instance of this blemish in his character. It was under Molière's friendly auspices that Racine's first published play, "*La Thébaïde*," was put upon the stage. This was at the Palais Royal, Molière's own theatre, and it had a run of a dozen nights, and was revived the next season. It was in the same year (1664) that Louis XIV.'s recovery from the measles inspired our courtly poet to celebrate this important event in such flattering verses that he was rewarded with a pension of six hundred francs, and he was

indebted to the munificence of the Court for many "refreshers" on other occasions.

His next play was "Alexandre le Grand," which was also brought out by Molière, in December, 1665; and it was in connection with this arrangement that the rupture between the two had its origin. The sensitive poet seems to have been disgusted by the manner in which it was being acted; for, a fortnight after it had been put on the boards at the Palais Royal, Molière's company learned with astonishment and indignation that it was being simultaneously performed at a rival theatre, that of the Hôtel de Bourgogne. The actors at the Palais Royal punished the poet's underhand conduct by mulcting him of his share of the profits, and dividing them all among themselves. Another quarrel occurred about this time which reflects still less credit upon Racine's sense of generosity and gratitude. His friends of Port Royal, amongst whom were some of his own kinsfolk, regarded his career as a writer of plays, and his intimacy with actors and actresses, with alarm and aversion. His aunt, Agnès Racine, who was one of them, wrote him an affectionate letter of sorrowful remonstrance, the only immediate effect of which was a bitter resentment which soon afterwards found expression in a wholesale invective directed against the principles and practice of the Port Royalists. His wrath was aggravated by a pamphlet war between his old master, Pierre Nicole, and a certain Desmarets, who had attacked all Jansenists as heretics.¹ Nicole, in his reply, taunted Desmarets with having formerly written novels and plays,

¹ Cornelius Jansen was a Dutch divine, whose tenets on Grace and Predestination, as set forth in his great work "Augustinus," were condemned by three successive Popes. The Jansenist doctrines were supported by the Port Royalists and opposed by the Jesuits in France, the principal champions of the former party being Pascal, Arnauld, and Nicole.

and took occasion to inveigh against all such people as public poisoners. Racine chose to consider himself personally insulted by these strictures, and wrote a couple of violent letters, in which he did all he could to expose the Port-Royalists to ridicule and contempt. The publication of the first of these letters widened the breach that already existed between them and their headstrong *protégé*; but he was induced by the judicious advice of Boileau to forego his intention of sending the second letter also to the press, nor did it see the light of publicity till after the poet's death. He even endeavoured to arrest the sale of the first letter, and long afterwards, at a meeting of the Academy, referred to this incident as the most disgraceful spot in his life, and one that he would give his heart's blood to efface.

In 1667 one of his best tragedies, and by many it is reckoned his masterpiece, was acted at the Hôtel de Bourgogne. This was "Andromaque," and the part of the heroine was taken by Mademoiselle du Parc, whom Racine persuaded to leave the Palais Royal for the purpose. Its success was immediate, and his reputation established as a formidable rival to Corneille. Nor has the verdict of posterity failed to confirm the judgment of his contemporaries. With the exception of "Phèdre," no other of his tragedies has been more often represented at Parisian theatres, and the late G. H. Lewes, among English critics, has pronounced the character of Hermione to be the finest creation of Racine's genius.

"Andromaque" was followed in 1668 by his first and last comedy, "Les Plaideurs;" and the popularity of this clever travesty of law and lawyers has, like Cowper's "John Gilpin," made the author's name familiar to many who have little or no acquaintance with his more serious work. He had himself had some experience of a court of justice. It has been already mentioned that he held for a

time the title of Prior of Epinay; but his right was disputed, and the lawsuit that followed brought the whole matter into such a state of mystification and confusion that the prospect of any definite decision seemed as remote as the Greek Kalends. No such witty satire had been directed against the gentlemen of the long robe since the days of Rabelais, though somehow it failed to make a hit at first, but when "le grand monarque" deigned to laugh at it, Paris began to see the joke, and laughed too.

Racine was now steadily producing a new drama almost every year; and between 1664 and 1677 ten of his plays were acted on the Paris boards. He only wrote two more, after a long interval, and those for a special purpose, and in quite another vein. In 1673 he received the blue ribbon of literary ambition, the honour of admission among the famous forty of the Académie Française, which had been founded by Richelieu in 1635. Four years later he was appointed to share with his friend Boileau the distinction of historiographer to the king, to which office there was attached the annual salary of 2,000 crowns. He was thus relieved from the necessity of supporting himself by writing for the stage, and this had probably as much to do with his long silence, which lasted from 1677 to 1689, as the annoyance and disappointment which he felt at the comparative failure of his latest and perhaps best classical tragedy, "Phèdre." A plot had been set on foot by the Duchesse de Bouillon and others to damn the play by buying up all the best seats at the theatre of the Hôtel Bourgogne, where "Phèdre" was to appear, and by starting a rival drama at another house, composed by a bookseller's hack of the name of Pradon on the very same theme. For the first few nights Racine's play was acted to empty boxes, and though the triumph of his enemies was short lived, the poet's feelings were so deeply wounded that he renounced all further efforts to court the favour of

the fickle public. He had even serious thoughts of forsaking the world altogether, and becoming a monk, but was persuaded to adopt what for him at least was no doubt a wiser course, and at the age of thirty-eight (1677) he married Catherine de Romanet, a simple minded but excellent woman, who had a little fortune of her own. As a husband and a father (he had a family of two sons and five daughters), he gave himself up to a blameless and domestic life, and a complete reconciliation with the Solitaires of Port Royal was cemented by a frank apology for the sarcasms which he had levelled against them ten years before. Boileau acted as peacemaker on this occasion, as he had endeavoured to do when the rupture took place, and it is amusing to learn how the austere Antoine Arnauld and Pierre Nicole were persuaded to read their old pupil's version of the time-honoured story of Phædra and Hippolytus, and that the former relented so far as to praise the moral lesson which it taught, though he could not forgive him for trying to improve upon Euripides, and complained, "Why did he make Hippolytus in love?"

As the king's historiographers, Boileau and Racine accompanied his victorious troops on several campaigns, but neither of them did more than accumulate materials which were never reduced to any coherent and permanent shape. Like the younger poet, Boileau discontinued all other literary work for many years after his appointment to this office. The regularity of Racine's married life was all that his friends of Port Royal could desire. He mapped out his hours with methodical precision, giving one third of his day to devotional exercises, another to his professional avocations, and the remainder to his family and friends.

Madame de Maintenon, whom Louis XIV. had privately married in 1684, took a warm interest in a convent for the education of young ladies, which she had established at St. Cyr. Here it was the custom for the girls to recite

plays at certain times, chiefly those of Corneille and Racine ; and this they had done on one occasion with such evident reliab for the tenderer passages, when " Andromache " had been selected for performance, that it was deemed unsuitable for repetition, and Racine was requested by Madame de Maintenon to write something expressly for her young charges of a more edifying tendency. Boileau advised him to decline the commission as one beneath his powers, but he was unwilling to offend Madame de Maintenon, and determined to do his best. The fruit of this resolution was the sacred drama of " Esther," which was privately performed at the Maison de St. Cyr in 1689, and met with much applause. Encouraged by this success, he essayed a higher flight in " Athalie," which was acted by the same young performers in 1691, and is justly regarded as the finest specimen of its kind. Neither of these sacred dramas was acted on a public stage till long after Racine's death, which occurred on the 12th of April, 1699. A short history of Port Royal was his last work, and formed a fitting conclusion to his chequered relations with that celebrated community ; for therein he did full justice to the merits to which he had been blinded by passion in the hotter days of his theatrical career, and nobly repaid the debt of gratitude that he owed to those whose pious instructions had so long lain dormant but not dead, as testified by his subsequent conversion and the exalted religious sentiments of his later writings.

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THE THEBAÏD;
OR,
THE BROTHERS AT WAR
A TRAGEDY.
1664.

INTRODUCTION TO THE THEBAÏD.

THIS play, which was first acted in 1664, when Racine was in his twenty-fifth year, is a tragedy founded upon the "Seven against Thebes" of Æschylus and the "Phœnician Women" of Euripides. The part of Hæmon is borrowed from the "Antigone" of Sophocles, and free use has been made of Rotrou's tragedy of the same name. The author, in the preface to this drama in his collected works, begs the reader's indulgence for its imperfections, in consideration of the early age at which he wrote it. He apologizes for the wholesale slaughter of nearly all the characters at its close on the ground that he has therein only followed tradition. Love occupies but a subsidiary place in the development of the plot, the main theme being the hatred between the sons of Œdipus, as inheritors of the curse pronounced against the latter for the parricide and incest of which he was unwittingly guilty.

The influence of Corneille is strongly marked in this the earliest of Racine's published plays; and neither in matter nor style is there more than a faint promise of original genius.

CHARACTERS.

ETEOCLES, *King of Thebes.*

POLYNICES, *brother of Eteocles.*

JOCASTA, *mother of those two princes, and of Antigone.*

ANTIGONE, *sister of Eteocles and Polynices.*

CREON, *their uncle.*

HEMON, *son of Creon, lover of Antigone.*

OLYMPIA, *confidential friend of Jocasta.*

ATTALUS, *confidential friend of Creon.*

A SOLDIER *of the army of Polynices.*

GUARDS.

The scene is laid at Thebes, in a room of the palace.

THE THEBAÏD;

OR,

THE BROTHERS AT WAR.

ACT I.

Scene 1.

JOCASTA, OLYMPIA,

JOCASTA.

Olympia, are they gone? What grief is mine,
To pay with weeping for one moment's rest!
For six long months mine eyes have open'd thus
Only to tears, nor ever closed in peace:
Ah, would that death might seal them up for aye,
Ere they behold this darkest deed of all!
Have they encountered?

OLYMPIA.

From th' high city wall
I saw their hosts for battle all array'd,
Their bright arms flashing in the sun; then left
The ramparts straight to bring you word; for there
I saw the king himself march, sword in hand,
Before his troops, teaching the stoutest hearts
Surpassing eagerness to dare the worst.

JOCASTA.

No doubt remains, Olympia, they are bent
On mutual slaughter. Let the Princess know,

And bid her hasten hither. Righteous Heav'n,
Support my weakness. We must after them,
Part these unnatural brothers, or else die
Slain by their hands. The fatal day is come,
Bare dread of which has fill'd me with despair?
Of no avail have been my prayers and tears;
The Fates not yet their wrath have satisfied.

O Sun, that givest light to all the world,
Why hast thou left us not in deepest night?
Shall thy fair beams on deeds of darkness shine,
Nor horror turn thine eyes from what we see?
Alas, such portents can appal no more,
The race of Læius has made them trite;
Thou canst unmoved behold my guilty sons,
For crimes more heinous yet their parents wrought;
Thou dost not shudder if my sons forswear
Their solemn oaths, unnatural murderers both,
Knowing them from incestuous union born,
Rather would'st wonder were they virtuous.

Scene 2.

JOCASTA, ANTIGONE, OLYMPIA.

JOCASTA.

My daughter, have you heard our misery?

ANTIGONE.

Yes, they have told me of my brothers' rage.

JOCASTA.

Let us then hasten, dear Antigone,
To stop, if it may be, their fratricide.
Come, let us show them what they hold most dear,
And see if they will yield to our attack,
Or if in blinded frenzy they will dare
To shed our blood, ere each the other slays.

ANTIGONE.

Mother, 'tis over! Eteocles is here!

Scene 3.

JOCASTA, ETEOCLES, ANTIGONE, OLYMPIA.

JOCASTA.

Your arm, Olympia! Anguish makes me weak.

ETEOCLES.

Mother, what trouble ails you?

JOCASTA.

Ah! my son!
Do not I see your raiment stain'd with blood?
Is it your brother's blood? Is it your own?

ETEOCLES.

No, Madam, it is neither. In his camp
My brother Polynices loiters yet,
And will not meet my challenge face to face,
But only sent an Argive force, that dared
Dispute our sally from these walls; rash fools!
I made them bite the dust; their blood it is,
Which you may see.

JOCASTA.

But what did you intend?
What sudden impulse led you, all at once,
To pour your troops upon the plain?

ETEOCLES.

'Twas time

I acted as I did, for, lingering here,
My fame grew tarnish'd, and hard words arose
From all the people, blaming me for sloth,
When loom'd already Famine's dreadful form;
I heard regrets that they had crown'd me king,
Complaints that I had fail'd to justify
Their choice to that high rank. So, come what may,
I must content them; Thebes from this day forth

Shall captive be no more ; no troops of mine
 Being left to overawe, let her decide,
 Alone, the issue. I have men enough
 To keep the field ; if Fortune aid our arms,
 Bold Polynices and his proud allies
 Shall leave her free, or perish at my feet.

JOCASTA.

Heav'ns ! Could you let such blood your arms defile ?
 Has then the crown for you such fatal charm ?
 If only to be gain'd by fratricide,
 Would my son wear it at a price so dear ?
 Does honour urge ? With you alone it rests
 To give us peace without recourse to crime,
 And, vanquishing your savage wrath this day,
 Your brother satisfy and reign with him.

ETEOCLES.

To share my crown ! And call you that to reign ?
 To tamely yield what my own right has giv'n !

JOCASTA.

You know, my son, how birth and justice grant
 This dignity to him as well as you ;
 How Œdipus, ere ending his sad course,
 Ordain'd that each of you his year should reign,
 And, having but one kingdom to bequeath,
 Will'd you should both be rulers in your turn.
 To these conditions you subscribed. The lot
 Summon'd you first to pow'r supreme, and so
 The throne you mounted, unopposed by him,
 Unwilling now to let him take your place.

ETEOCLES.

No, Madam ; to the sceptre he has lost
 All claim, since Thebes refused to ratify
 Our compact, and, in making me her king,
 'Tis she, not I, who barr'd him from the throne :
 Has Thebes less reason now to dread his pow'r,

After six months of outrage at his hands?
How could she e'er obey that savage Prince
Who arms against her Famine and the Sword?
How could she take for king Mycenæ's slave,
Who for all Thebans hatred only feels?
Who, to the king of Argos basely bound,
Links him in marriage to our bitterest foes?
For Argos chose him for his son-in-law,
In hopes that by his means he might behold
Thebes laid in ashes. Love had little part
In such foul union; fury lit the torch
Of Hymen. Thebes, t'escape his chains, crown'd me,
Expects thro' me to see her troubles end,
Must needs accuse me if I play her false,—
I am her captive, I am not her king!

JOCASTA.

Say, rather say, ungrateful heart and fierce,
Nought else can move you like the diadem.
Yet I am wrong; it is not royal rank,
But guilt alone, that has a charm for you.
Well, since your soul so hungers after that,
Why stop at fratricide? Slay me as well.
Seems it small sin to shed a brother's blood?
I offer you my own. Will that suffice?
Thus then will you have vanquish'd all your foes,
Removed all checks, committed every crime,
No hateful rival to the throne be left,
And you be greatest of all criminals!

MEQCLES.

What will content you, Madam? Must I leave
The throne, and crown my brother king instead?
Must I, to further your unjust design,
Own him as lord who is my subject now,
And, to advance you to your height of bliss,
Yield myself up a prey to his revenge?
Must I submit to die?—

JOCASTA.

What words are these?
 Good Heav'ns! How ill you read my secret heart!
 I do not ask you to resign your sway;
 Reign still, my son, for such is my desire;
 But if my many woes can pity stir,
 If in your breast you keep some love for me,
 Or if your own unblemish'd fame be dear,
 Then let your brother share that high estate;
 Only an empty splendour will be his;
 Your pow'r enhanced thereby will sweeter prove;
 Your subjects all will praise the generous deed,
 And ever wish to keep a prince so rare;
 This noble act will not impair your rights,
 But render you the greatest of all kings,
 As the most just. Or, if you will not bend
 To meet a mother's wish, if, at such price,
 Peace seems impossible, and pow'r alone
 Has charms for you; at least, to give me ease,
 Suspend your arms. Grant to your mother's tears
 This favour, while I seek your brother's camp:
 Pity perchance may in his soul reside;
 Or I at least may bid my last farewell.
 This moment let me go, e'en to his tent,
 And unattended; this shall be my hope;
 My heart-felt sighs may move him to relent.

ETEOCLES.

Mother, you need not go; here may you see
 Your son again, if in that interview
 You find such charms. It rests with him alone
 To effect a truce. This very hour your wish
 May be fulfill'd, this palace welcome him.
 I will go further, and, that you may know
 He wrongs me in imputing treachery,
 And that I play no hateful tyrant's part,
 Let sentence be pronounced by gods and men.
 If so the people will, to him I yield

My place; but let him bow to their decree,
If it be exile; yea, I pledge my word,
Free and unfetter'd Thebes shall choose her king.

Scene 4.

JOCASTA, ETEOCLES, ANTIGONE, CREON, OLYMPIA.

CREON.

The sally has alarm'd your subjects, sire;
Thebes at your fancied loss already weeps,
While horror and affright reign everywhere,
And people tremble gazing from the walls.

ETEOCLES.

Soon shall their vain alarm be quieted.
Madam, I go to join my gallant troops;
Meanwhile you may accomplish your desires,
Bring Polynices in, and talk of peace.
Creon, the queen commands here in my room,
Prepare the people to obey her will;
Your son, Menæceus shall be left behind
To take and give her orders; him I choose,
For, high repute with all to valour join'd,
His merits will the timid reassure,
And give no handle to the enemy.
Command his service, Madam.

(To CREON.)

Follow me.

CREON.

What, sire!—

ETEOCLES.

Yes, Creon, I am so resolv'd.

CREON.

And do you thus resign your sovereign pow'r

ETEOCLES.

Whether I do or not, ne'er vex yourself ;
Fulfil my bidding, and come after me.

Scene 5.

JOCASTA, ANTIGONE, CREON, OLYMPIA.

CREON.

What have you done ? Madam, what course is this, . .
To make the conqueror seek ignoble flight ?
Your counsel ruins all.

JOCASTA.

Nay, all preserves ;
For thus, and thus alone, can Thebes be saved.

CREON.

What, Madam ! when, (our state being strong as now,
Contingents of six thousand men and more
Swelling our ranks and promising success,)
The king lets victory from his hands be snatch'd !

JOCASTA.

There may be conquest, yet no glory won ;
Shame and remorse oft follow victory.
When brothers twain for mutual slaughter arm,
To part them not may be to lose them both :
Or if one conquer, to have suffer'd him
So to prevail were his worst injury.

CREON.

Too high their wrath has ris'n—

JOCASTA.

It may be calm'd.

CREON.

Both wish to reign.

JOCASTA.

And so in truth they shall.

CREON.

Kings' majesty admits no partnership;
'Tis no commodity to be resign'd,
And then resumed.

JOCASTA.

They shall accept as law
The interest of the State.

• CREON.

Which is to have
A single king, who, governing his realms
With constant sway, accustoms to his laws
People and Princes. But alternate rule
Would give two tyrants, when it gave two kings.
One brother would the other's work destroy
By contrary decrees; they'd ever be
Scheming to exercise despotic pow'r,
And public policy would change each year.
To put a period to their sovereignty
Means to give greater scope for violence.
Both in their turn would make their subjects groan;
Like mountain torrents lasting but a day,
Which any barrier makes more dangerous,
Ruin and misery must mark their course.

JOCASTA.

Nay, rather shall we see the brothers vie
In noble schemes to win their country's love.
But, Creon, own that all your trouble springs
From fear lest peace should render treason vain,
Seat my sons firmly in the throne you seek,
And break the snares you set to catch their steps.
As at their death there falls by right of birth
Into your hands the sceptre, natural ties
Of common blood between you and my sons
Make you regard them as your greatest foes,

And your ambition, aiming at the crown,
Inspires a hatred which they share alike.
With dangerous counsels you infect the king,
And make a friend of one to ruin both.

CREON.

I nourish no such fancies ; for the king
My high respect is ardent and sincere ;
And my ambition is not, as you think,
To reach the throne, but to maintain him there.
My sole concern is to exalt his pow'r ;
I hate his foes, and there lies all my crime :
I care not to deny it. But, methinks,
This crime of mine finds no like feeling here.

JOCASTA.

I am his mother, Creon ; if I love
His brother, is the king less dear for that ?
Let cringing courtiers hate him as they may,
A mother's tender heart beats ever true.

ANTIGONE.

Your interest herein is one with ours,
The king has enemies that are not yours ;
You are a father, and amongst his foes,
Consider, Creon, that your son is found,
For Polydices has no warmer friend
Than Hæmon.

CREON.

True, nor am I less than just ;
He holds in my regard a special place,
Which is, as it should be, to hate him more
Than any other ; in just wrath I wish
That all might hate him as his father does.

ANTIGONE.

After such valiant deeds as he has wrought,
The general feeling has another bent.

CREON.

I see it, Madam, and I grieve thereat,
But know my duty when a son revolts;
All these grand exploits that have won him praise
Excite my just resentment. For Disgrace
Is ever constant to the rebel's side;
His bravest actions bring his greatest guilt,
The prowess of his arm but marks his crime,
And Glory scorns to own Disloyalty.

ANTIGONE.

Heed better Nature's voice.

CREON.

The dearer he
Who does th' offence, the more the ill is felt.

ANTIGONE.

But should a father carry wrath so far?
You hate too much.

CREON.

You are too lenient,
In pleading for a rebel you transgress.

ANTIGONE.

The cause of Innocence is worth a word.

CREON.

I know what makes his innocence for you.

ANTIGONE.

And I what makes him hateful in your sight.

CREON.

For Love sees not like common eyes.

JOCASTA.

Beware
Of what my wrath can do, when you abuse

The liberty which may be stretch'd too far
And bring down ruin on your head at last.

ANTIGONE.

The public good weighs little on his soul,
And Patriotism masks another flame.
I know it, Creon, but abhor a suit,
Which 'twere your wisdom to leave unexpress'd.

CREON.

I'll do so, Madam ; and, beginning now,
Will rid you of my presence. For I see
To pay you my respect but points your scorn :
My son,—more happy,—shall supply my room.
The king has summon'd me, and I obey.
Hæmon and Polynices,—send for them.
Farewell.

JOCASTA.

Yes, wicked schemer, both will come,
And with united efforts foil your plots.

Scene 6:

JOCASTA, ANTIGONE, OLYMPIA.

ANTIGONE.

The traitor ! What a height of insolence !

JOCASTA.

All his presumptuous words will turn to shame.
For soon, if our desires are heard in Heav'n,
Peace will ambition's retribution bring.
But every hour is precious, we must haste
And summon Hæmon and your brother too ;
I am prepared to grant them to this end
Whate'er safe conduct they think fit to ask.
And gracious Heav'n, if Justice may give pause
To my misfortunes, then incline to peace

The heart of Polynices ; aid my sighs,*
Make eloquent my trouble and my tears !

ANTIGONE (*alone*).

If Heav'n can feel compassion for a flame
As innocent as mine, then bring me back
My Hæmon faithful still, and grant to-day
That with my lover Love himself may come.

ACT II.

Scene 1.

ANTIGONE, HÆMON.

HÆMON.

What ! Will you rob me of the face I love
So soon, when I have suffer'd a whole year
Of absence ? Have you call'd me to your side
To snatch away again so sweet a prize ?

ANTIGONE.

Shall I so soon, then, cast a brother off,
And let my mother seek the gods alone ?
Ought I to shape my duty to your wish,
Think but of love, and care for peace no more ?

HÆMON.

No duty bids thee thwart my happiness ;
They can consult the oracle full well
Without us. Let me rather at your eyes
Question my heart's Divinity what fate
Is mine. Should I be overbold to ask
If their accustom'd sweetness welcome still
The thought of my affection, nor resent
My ardour ? Can they pity where they wound ?

While cruel absence dragg'd its weary course,
 Say, have you wish'd me to be faithful still?
 Thought you how Death was threat'ning, far from you,
 A lover who should die but at your knees?
 Ah! when such beauty penetrates the soul,
 When the heart dares to lift its hopes to you,
 How sweet to worship charms divinely fair!
 What torture when they vanish out of sight!
 Each moment's separation seem'd an age;
 And I had long since closed my sad career,
 Had I not trusted, till I might return,
 That absence would to you be proof of love,
 And my obedience in your memory dwell
 To plead for me while banish'd from your face;
 And that each thought of me would make you think,
 How great must be the love that thus obeys.

ANTIGONE.

Yes, I knew well that such a faithful soul
 Would find the pain of absence hard to bear;
 And, if I may my secret thoughts reveal,
 The wish would sometimes come that you might feel
 Some shade of bitterness, to make the days,
 Parted from me, seem longer than before.
 But blame me not, for mine own heart was full
 Of sorrow, and but wish'd that you might share
 Its load, grown yet more heavy since the war
 Brought your invading forces on this land.
 Ah! with what anguish did I then behold
 My dearest on opposing sides array'd!
 With countless pangs my heart was torn to see
 Loved ones without our walls, loved ones within:
 At each assault a thousand terrors clash'd
 In conflict, and a thousand deaths I died.

HÆMON.

Tis pitiful indeed; but have I done
 Aught but as you yourself directed me?
 In following Polynices I obey'd
 Your wish; nay more, your absolute command.

A friend's devoted heart I pledg'd him then,
Quitted my country, left my father's side,
Thereby incurring his indignant wrath,
And, worst of all, banish'd myself from you.

ANTIGONE.

I bear it all in mind; Hæmon is right,
In serving Pölynices, me you serv'd.
Dear was he then to me, and dear to-day,
All that was done for him was done for me.
We loved each other from our tenderest years,
And o'er his heart I held unrivall'd sway;
To please him was my chief delight, to share
His sorrows was the sister's privilege.
O that such pow'r to move him still were mine!
Then would he love the peace for which I yearn;
Our common woe would so be lull'd to rest,
And I should see him, nor would you from me
Be parted.

HÆMON.

He abhors this dreadful war;
Yea, I have seen him sigh with grief and rage,
That he has been compell'd to make his way
Thro' bloodshed to regain his father's throne.
Hope that the gods, touch'd by our miseries,
Will soon the rift between the brothers heal;
May Heav'n restore affection to their hearts,
And in their sister's breast keep love alight!

ANTIGONE.

That latter task indeed, ah! doubt it not,
Were easier far than to appease their rage.
Well do I know them both, and am assured
Their hearts, dear Hæmon, are more hard than mine.
But sometimes Heav'n works marvels past belief.

Scene 2.

ANTIGONE, HÆMON, OLYMPIA.

ANTIGONE.

- Now let us hear what said the oracle.
What must be done?

OLYMPIA.

Alas!

ANTIGONE.

What! were you told
That war must still be waged?

OLYMPIA.

Ah! worse than that!

HÆMON.

What woe is this the angry Pow'rs portend?

OLYMPIA.

Prince, hear the answer for yourself, then judge:
"Ye Thebans, thus doth Fate ordain,
That if ye would from war be freed,
The last hope of the royal seed
With blood outpour'd your land must stain."

ANTIGONE.

How has this offspring of a hapless race
Deserv'd such condemnation, oh, ye gods?
Was not my father's death vengeance enough,
That wrath must follow all our family?

HÆMON.

Lady, this sentence is not aim'd at you,
For virtue shelters you from punishment.
The gods can read your innocence of heart.

ANTIGONE. .

Tho' innocence affords no trusty shield,
Yet 'tis not for myself I fear their stroke.
The guilt of Œdipus will slay his child .
Waiting without a murmur for her death.
But if I must my ground of dread disclose,
It is for you, dear Hæmon, that I fear ;
From that unhappy stock like us you spring.
I see too plainly that the wrath of Heav'n
This baleful honour will to you extend
As unto us, and make our princes wish
Their birth had been from lowest of the low.

HÆMON.

Can I regret a destiny so grand,
Or shrink from meeting such a noble death ?
To be descended from the blood of kings
Is glorious, e'en if we must lose that blood
Soon as receiv'd.

ANTIGONE.

If any sin is ours,
Should Heav'n for that take vengeance upon you ?
The father and the children might suffice,
Without more distant quest for guiltless blood.
Th' offence that we inherit 'tis for us
To expiate. Then slay us, heav'nly Pow'rs,
But spare the rest!

My sire, dear Hæmon, brings
Your utter ruin now, and I, perchance,
Yet more than he. Punishment falls on you,
And on your House, because my father sinn'd,—
And you have loved his daughter, which has wrought
More harm than incest and than parricide.

HÆMON.

My love, say you ? Is that a fatal crime ?
Can it be wrong to love celestial charms ?
And since my passion meets such sweet response,
How can it e'er deserve the wrath of Heav'n ?

My sighs concern you and your heart alone,
For you it is to judge if they offend :
As to your potent sentence they appeal,
Shall they be blamable or innocent.
Let Heav'n decree my ruin if it will,
Still shall the causes of that fate be dear,
Proud shall I be to die because I claim
Kinship with royalty, and happier still
To die your subject. In this common wreck,
Why should I wish to live a life forlorn ?
The gods would all in vain my death delay,
Their mercy would be foil'd by my despair.
But after all perchance our fears are vain,
Patience !

Lo, Polynices and the Queen !

Scene 3.

JOCASTA, POLYNICES, ANTIGONE, HEMON.

POLYNICES.

Cease to oppose me, in the name of Heav'n :
I plainly see peace is impossible.
I hoped the eternal justice of the gods
Might against tyranny declare itself,
And, weary of the sight of so much blood,
Might grant to each of us his proper rank ;
But, since they back injustice openly,
And side with guilt, I can no longer hope,
When Heav'n itself favours unrighteousness,
That a rebellious people may be just.
Shall then a shameless rabble judge my cause,
Whose base self-interest, tho' remote from his,
Inspires the zeal that serves my enemy.
The multitude admit not Reason's sway.
Victim already of this people's scorn,
Me they have banish'd, nor will take again
Th' offended prince, whom they a tyrant deem.
And as to honour's dictates they are deaf,

They think the aim of all the world, revenge.
Their hatred owns no curb, but, started once,
Holds on its course for ever.

JOCASTA.

If, indeed,
This people have such fear of you, my Son,
And all the Thebans dread your sovereignty,
Why, when they steel their hearts against your plea,
Thro' bloodshed seek the sceptre they withhold?

POLYNICES.

Is it the people's part to choose their lord?
Soon as they hate a king must he resign.
His crown? And by their hatred or their love,
Is his right limited to mount the throne,
Or leave it? With affection or with fear
Let these regard me, as they will; what birth,
Not their caprice, has made, they must accept,
And pay respect if they refuse to love.

JOCASTA.

When subjects hate their king, he then becomes
A tyrant.

POLYNICES.

Nay, a lawful prince can ne'er
Be call'd such. None deserve that odious name
With rights like mine, nor does a people's hate
Make tyrants. Rather name my brother so.

JOCASTA.

He's loved by all.

POLYNICES.

A tyrant 'tis they love,
Who by a hundred tricks of meanness tries
To keep the footing he has gain'd by force;
Who learns from pride lessons of humbleness,
His brother's tyrant, but his people's slave.
To keep the sceptre to himself, he bends

Submissive, and, to make me hated, courts
Contempt. Not without cause do they prefer
A traitor, for the people love a slave,
And fear to have a master. To consult
Their whims were treason done to royalty.

JOCASTA.

Has discord then for you such matchless charms,
Already weary of the armistice?
After such troubles shall we never cease,
You, to shed blood, and I, to weep in vain?
Will you grant nothing to a mother's tears?
Daughter, restrain your brother, if you can;
Erst was your love the only check he own'd.

ANTIGONE.

Ah! if his soul is deaf to pity's voice
For your sake, can his former love for me,
Estranged by absence, leave me room for hope?
Scarce in his memory have I still a place:
He knows no pleasure but in shedding blood.
No longer may we trust to find in him
The gallant prince who shuddered at the thought
Of crime, whose generous soul with kindness teem'd,
Honour'd his mother, and his sister loved:
Now Nature's ties for him are idle dreams,
That sister he disowns, that mother scorns;
And his Ingratitude, long nurs'd by Pride,
Holds us as strangers, yea, as enemies.

POLYNICES.

Charge not that sin on my sore troubled soul:
Say rather, Sister, you yourself are changed,
Say, the unjust usurper of my rights
Has robb'd me of a sister's tenderness.
The same as ever, I forget you not.

ANTIGONE.

• Hard heart, is this to love as I love you,

To rest unmoved by all my painful sighs,
To doom me still to sorrows manifold?

POLYNICES.

Sister, is this to love your brother then,
To urge entreaties justice must refuse,
To wish to wrest the sceptre from my hand?
Ye gods! Then Eteocles himself is kind!
A tyrant wrongs me, yet you favour him
Unfairly.

ANTIGONE.

Nay, I hold your interests dear.
Think not these eyes are false that weep for you;
My tears conspire not with your enemies.
That peace for which I yearn would be to me
Torture—should Polynices lose thereby
A throne. The only favour that I seek
Is for a longer space to look on you,
My Brother; suffer me to see your face
A few brief days, and give me time to find
Some means that may restore you to the rank
Which you inherit, without loss of blood
So precious. Can you now refuse to grant
This little favour to a sister's tears,
A mother's sighs?

JOCASTA.

What have you yet to fear?
Why wish so soon to leave us? All this day,
Is it not all included in the truce?
Must it be ended ere 'tis well begun?
See how your brother, laying down his arms,
Permits our meeting,—is your will more stern?

ANTIGONE.

Yes, Brother, his compassion passes yours;
His mother's tears can move him, and our grief
To-day has forced him to disarm his wrath.
You call him cruel; you are worse than he.

HÆMON.

My lord, no danger presses ; you may well
 Let their entreaties even yet prevail.
 Grant to their earnest wish this day, ungrudg'd,
 Perchance they may devise some happy scheme
 To heal the quarrel. Nor let Eteocles
 Have pow'r to say that, were it not for you,
 Peace might have been. • Thus will you satisfy
 A mother and a sister, yea your own
 Honour.

What brings this man with looks perturb'd ?

Scene 4.

JOCASTA, POLYNICES, ANTIGONE, HÆMON, A SOLDIER.

SOLDIER (*to POLYNICES*).

My lord, the truce is broken, and the fight •
 Rages once more ; Creon attacks your host ;
 The Thebans at their king's command renounce
 Their oath ; and scarce can brave Hippomedon,
 Filling your place, withstand the general charge ;
 He order'd me to tell you so, my lord.

POLYNICES.

The traitors ! Come, my Hæmon, we must go.
 (*To the Queen.*) Madam, you see how well he keeps his
 word.

Straight will I meet his challenge and attack,
 Since he will have it so.

JOCASTA.

My Son, my Son !—
 He hears me not. Cries are as vain as tears.
 Go, dear Antigone, with wingèd feet,
 Beg Hæmon to do all he can to part
 Your ruthless brothers.

Ah ! strength fails my limbs,
 Too weak to move. One task remains—to die !

ACT III.

Scene 1.

JOCASTA, OLYMPIA.

JOCASTA.

Olympia, go, and view the dreadful sight ;
See if their rage has found no obstacle,
If one or other owns no touch of shame.
They say Meneceus is gone to urge
The claims of peace.

OLYMPIA.

Some noble purpose arm'd
His spirit, beam'd heroic in his eye,
And you must hope, dear Madam, to the end.

JOCASTA.

Go, look, Olympia, and then bring me word
Of all you see ; lighten this anxious heart.

OLYMPIA.

How can I leave you thus in solitude ?

JOCASTA.

Go, I would be alone ; if such can be
My lot, with such a multitude of woes !

Scene 2.

JOCASTA.

Ah ! will these sad afflictions last for aye,
Nor e'er exhaust the vengeance of the gods ?
Will they inflict a thousand cruel deaths,
Yet hurry not my steps towards the grave ?
Less terribly severe would be their wrath,

Were it to strike the guilty once for all!
 How infinite their punishments appear,
 When life is left to those that suffer them!
 Heav'n knows that since that thrice accurs'd day,
 When I first found I had become the wife
 Of mine own son, the sufferings I endured
 Surpass'd the keenest torments of the damn'd.
 Yet, righteous gods, did an unconscious crime
 Deserve such wrath implacable? Alas!
 I knew him not, that luckless son of mine.
 'Twas you yourselves who led him to my arms,
 Yourselves that open'd wide the horrid gulf.
 Such is the justice of these mighty gods!
 They bring our footsteps to the brink of crime,
 Force us to fall, and then are merciless.
 Do they delight in leading men astray,
 To make them very types of misery?
 And can they not, when they would vent their wrath,
 Find criminals to whom the crime is sweet?

Scene 3.

JOCASTA, ANTIGONE.

JOCASTA.

Well, is all over? one or other slain,
 Comes the proud victor to add matricide
 To slaughter of a brother? Daughters, speak,

ANTIGONE.

Heav'n is pleas'd, the oracle fulfill'd.

JOCASTA.

What! My two sons are dead?

ANTIGONE.

Another life,
 Worthy of all its royal ancestry,
 Has purchased peace for Thebes, for you repose,

Yea, for our country sacrificed itself.

I ran to call back Hæmon and your son,
But ere I started they were far ahead ;
They heard me not, and vainly did I call
With cries of anguish on the name of each.
They both flew swiftly to the battle-field ;
And, as for me, mounting the ramparts' height,
I, with the people there, watch'd in alarm,
That seem'd to freeze our blood, the thickening fray.
Just at that fatal moment there steps forth,
Between the embattled ranks, our country's hope,
The youngest yet most honour'd of our blood,
The Prince Menœceus, worthy to be call'd
Brother of Hæmon and too good to be
The son of Creon ; in his zeal to show
His love for Thebes, in th' ears of either host
He cries :—" Halt ! Heav'n forbids th' unnatural strife !
To these commanding accents all give heed,
Astonish'd at so strange a spectacle,
And check the dark'ning tempest of their rage.
Then straightway he continues :—" Learn," says he,
" The kind decree of Fate, whereby full soon
Ye shall behold a limit to your woes.
I am the last descendant of your kings,
Whose blood, so Heav'n has will'd, must now be shed.
Welcome this blood then that my hand shall spill,
And welcome peace, beyond your hopes regain'd."
Thus speaks he, and therewith deals the death blow :
And when the Thebans saw their hero fall,
As tho' peace were but pain at such a cost,
Trembling they view'd that glorious sacrifice.
I saw th' afflicted Hæmon leave his place,
And fondly clasp his brother's blood-stain'd form,
While Creon in his turn threw down his arms,
And turn'd in tears toward his dying son.
Seeing them so absorb'd, all else forgot,
Both armies drew apart and left the field.
With agitated pulse and stricken soul,
I could not look upon a sight so sad,
Tho' full of admiration for that prince
Heroic.

JOCASTA.

I too must admire the deed
That makes me shudder.. Is it possible,
Ye gods, that after this Thebes still should find
No path to peace? Cannot this death sublime,
Which even moves my sons to cease from war,
Content you? Shall this noble victim die
Rejected? If to virtue you incline,
As crime you hate, if ye reward as well
As punish, shall not guilt be wash'd away
By this pure blood?

ANTIGONE.

Such virtue cannot fail
Of recompense, his life has more than paid
The debt we owe the gods; a hero's blood
That of a thousand criminals outweighs
In worth.

JOCASTA.

You little know the wrath of Heav'n,
That to my sorrow gives relief awhile,
But ever, when I think its hand is stay'd,
Makes ready to destroy me utterly.
This night it seems to wipe my tears away,
To show me when I wake new scenes of blood.
The hopes of peace with which it flatters me
A cruel oracle for aye forbids;
It brings my son, and bids me look on him,
But ah, how dearly purchased is that joy!
My son is deaf to all my earnest pray'rs,
Leaves me in sudden haste, and takes the field.
Thus ever cruel burns the wrath of Heav'n;
It only mocks us when it seems appeas'd,
And grows more fierce; it interrupts its blows,
To make them fall the heavier, and withdraws
Its arm to crush me.

ANTIGONE.

Let us hope all good
From this last wonder.

JOCASTA.

Can I, while my sons
Remain unreconciled? The younger heeds
Nought but his rights; the other only hears
The people's voice, and Creon's, whose base greed
Robb all his son's devotion of its fruit.
That gallant prince to save us dies in vain,
His father harms us more than he can help.
That faithless sire of two young heroes—

ANTIGONE.

Ah!

My Mother, see, he comes, and with the King.

Scene 4.

JOCASTA, ETEOCLES, ANTIGONE, CREON.

JOCASTA.

'Tis thus, my Son, then, that kings keep their word!

ETEOCLES.

Madam, this fray was not begun by me,
But by some soldiers, Argives and our own,
Who, having quarrell'd with each other, drew
Their comrades on to help them, till at length
A mere dispute into a battle turn'd:
A bloody one it doubtless would have been,
And settled once for all our rival claims,
Had not Menceceus by his noble end
Held back the arms of all the combatants.
That prince, last offspring of our royal race,
Transported with a patriotic love,
The fateful answer of the gods took home,
And gave himself to Death right willingly.

JOCASTA.

Oh, if Menceceus loved his country so
Life's sweet charm paled in comparison,

Cannot that self-same love at least avail
To check the fierce ambition of my son?
His grand example bids you follow him,
But not to die, nor even cease to reign :
You may by slight concession yet do more
Than all his blood outpour'd on our behalf.
Cease but to hate your brother, nothing else,
And you will bless us better than that death
Of self-devotion. Is it harder, say,
To love a brother, than, despising Life,
To rush into Death's arms? Easier for him
To shed his blood, than you to cherish yours?

ETEOCLES.

His virtue I admire no less than you,
And even envy such a glorious death.
Yet must I tell you, Madam, 'tis a task
More difficult to quit a throne than life.
Glory full oft makes us in love with death,
But few kings deem it glorious to obey.
The gods required his life, nor could the prince
Without disgrace refuse the sacrifice.
But as from him our country claim'd his blood,
So doth she bid me keep my throne and reign ;
And there, until she oust me, must I stay.
Let her but speak, and straight will I submit ;
Yea, Thebes shall see me, to appease her Fate,
Lay down the sceptre, and my life as well.

CREON.

My son is dead, nor do the gods require
Another victim. Let no blood of yours
Mingle with his. To give us peace he died,
Live you to grant it to our just desires.

ETEOCLES.

What! even Creon on the side of peace?

CREON.

For having loved too long this barbarous war,

You see how Heav'n has whelm'd me in despair :
My son is dead.

ETEOCLES.

And he must be aveng'd.

CREON.

On whom should I take vengeance for this stroke
Of misery ?

ETEOCLES.

Your foes are those of Thebes :
Avenge her and yourself.

CREON.

Among her foes
I find your brother, and my elder son :
How can I spill the blood that you and I
Partake ? And, one son lost, take my revenge
Upon the other ? 'Twould be sacrilege
To slay your brother, and to slay my son
Would outrage Nature. Shall I stain my hand
With blood so sacred, or with blood so dear ?
Can a good father by such cruel aid
Relieve his heart ? 'Twere ruin, not revenge !
One thought alone is like a healing balm,
My sorrows may at least your sceptre serve.
I shall have comfort, if the son I mourn
Brings by his death assured repose to Thebes.
Peace Heav'n has promis'd to Menœceus' blood :
Complete, my liege, what he has well begun,
Grant him the price he has a right to claim,
Nor fruitless let his self-devotion prove.

JOCASTA.

Since you are led to feel for our distress,
Menœceus' blood may work more wonders yet.
After this miracle, let Thebes take heart,
That which has altered you will change her lot.
Henceforth is peace no longer desperate ;
Nay, 'tis assured if Creon wills it so.

Soon will those iron hearts in pity melt:
My sons may well submit to pow'r that bends
The mind of Creon.

(to ETEOCLES.)

Let this change in him
Move you, my son, to lay your arms aside,
And banish savage hatred from your breast.
Give comfort to a mother, and console
Creon; restore to both of us a son.

ETEOCLES.

To grant your wish would turn me from a king
Into a subject. Polynices claims
The sovereign pow'r o'er me as well as Thebes;
With sceptred hand alone will he return.

Scene 5.

JOCASTA, ETEOCLES, ANTIGONE, CREON, ATTALUS.

ATTALUS (to ETEOCLES).

Sire, Polynices begs an interview;
A herald has arrived to tell us so.
He offers either to come here himself,
Or in his camp await you.

CREON.

It may be
That, grown more mild, he fain would end this war,
So long protracted, and ambition owns
A check; by this last battle taught to-day
Your pow'r at least is equal to his own.
The Greeks have served his fury long enough,
Yea, and the royal father of his bride,
Preferring solid peace t' unstable war,
Keeps, as I hear, Mycenæ for himself,
And makes him king of Argos. Brave indeed,
But prudent too, he seeks but to retreat
With honour. By this offer he means peace;

To-day must see it ratified, or else
For ever broken. You may thus secure
A firmer seat; let him have all he asks,
Except the diadem.

ETEOCLES.

And that alone

'Tis what he craves.

JOCASTA

See him at least.

CREON.

Yes, meet

His wish; alone you will transcend our pow'r
To make the ties of blood again prevail.

ETEOCLES.

Let us then go to him.

JOCASTA.

In Heaven's name,
Rather await his presence here, my Son.

ETEOCLES.

Well, Madam, be it so; and let him have
Safe conduct, and all due security.
Now let us go.

ANTIGONE.

If peace this day return
To Thebes, to Creon we shall owe the boon.

Scene 6.

CREON, ATTALUS.

CREON.

'Tis not the weal of Thebes that touches you,
Proud Princess; and your soul untamable,
That seems to flatter where it scorn'd so long

Thinks less of peace than of my son's return.
But we shall see ere long if her disdain
Will hold the throne as cheap as Creon's heart;
Soon shall we see, when Heaven has made me king,
Whether the son's luck will eclipse the sire's.

ATTALUS.

Who would not marvel at a change so rare!
Creon himself declaring now for peace!

CREON.

You think that peace then is the goal I seek?

ATTALUS.

It needs no musing to think that, my lord;
And seeing, as I do, your eager zeal,
Much I admire the generous resolve
Which makes you bury hatred in the tomb;
Menœceus, dying, did no nobler deed,
For he who can resentment sacrifice
For patriotism, would not spare his life.

CREON.

Ah! doubtless he who can constrain his will
To love his foe may make a friend of death.
But why should I forego my dear revenge,
And undertake my enemy's defence?
'Twas Polynices really slew my son;
Should I become his abject advocate?
And were I e'en to crush this deadly hate,
Could I the better cease to love the crown?
Nay, you shall see me, with unshaken zeal,
Alike abhor my foes and long for pow'r.
The throne is ever my most cherish'd hope:
I blush to be a subject where my sires
Were kings; I burn to reach the same high rank.
This is the object I have had in view
Since I could see. Now for two years and more
Each step has brought me nearer to my goal:
The fury of my nephews I have fed,

'Tis my ambition makes me foster their's ;
'Twas I who first made Eteocles refuse
To let his brother reign, therein unjust,
But strong thro' my support, lent for a while.
To dispossess him later, and myself
Place on the throne.

ATTALUS.

But if so keen for war,
Why do you snatch the weapons from their hands ?
Since their dissension is what you desire,
How comes it that they meet by your advice ?

CREON.

The war has proved more fatal to myself
Than to my foes ; the gods are too unkind ;
The plan I form'd is made to work my woe,
'Tis mine own hand they use to stab my heart.
Soon as the war was kindled, chastisement
Began for me, when Hæmon left my side
For Polynices ; I it was who fann'd
The brothers' enmity, and found a foe
In my own son. The broken truce, to-day,
Was due to me, 'twas I who roused the strife
That led to bloodshed, till the desperate deed
Of my Menœceus cut the chain I wove.
Still have I left a son, whom still I love,
A rebel tho' he be, and rival too ;
Him would I save when I destroy my foes ;
To lose them both would be too dear a price.
Besides, the Princes hate each other so,
Be sure they never will consent to peace ;
Well know I how to make the venom work,
Till they would rather die than be at one.
Brief may be enmity with other foes,
But when the bonds of Nature have been snapt,
Nothing can re-unite the sunder'd hearts
Which ties of love so strong have fail'd to hold :
When brothers hate, their hatred knows no bounds.
But absence cools their wrath, for when a foe,
One whom we most detest, is out of sight,

Resentment loses half its bitterness.
 Be not surprised then I would have them meet;
 I wish their eyes to reinforce their rage,
 That they, with hatred cherish'd not expell'd,
 May feel their false embraces stifle them.

ATTALUS.

More than aught else you have yourself to dread,
 Remorse may torture brows that wear a crown.

CREON.

The throne, when once attain'd, brings other cares,
 Remorse weighs lightly in comparison.
 The mind that is engross'd with present pow'r
 Dwells not upon the visions of the past;
 It separates itself from what it was,
 And deems its life began with sovereignty.
 Come, let us go. Remorse affects me not,
 Nor do I own a heart that guilt can scare:
 All the first steps to crime some effort cost,
 But easy those that follow, Attalus.

ACT IV.

Scene 1.

ETEOCLES, CREON.

ETEOCLES.

Yes, Creon, to this spot he soon will come,
 And here we may await him, both of us,
 Then learn what he would have; upon my word
 I think this meeting augurs little good.
 I know his overbearing temper well;
 He hates me with a hatred unimpair'd,
 Whose course, I ween, no mortal may arrest;
 And I, I hate him always, that's the truth.

CREON.

But if he now at length resigns his claim
To royalty, your hatred should subside.

ETEOCLES.

I think my heart will never be appeas'd ;
'Tis not his pride, it is himself I hate.
Relentless is our mutual enmity ;
'Tis not a twelvemonth's work, 'twas born with us,
And its dark venom, Creon, reach'd our hearts
As soon as life itself. We were sworn foes
In tenderest childhood ; yea, before our birth
That enmity began, fatal effect
Of our incestuous blood and parentage !
While yet imprison'd in the self-same womb,
We struggled hard, and made my mother feel
Where our divisions had their origin.
They flourish'd in the cradle, as you know ;
E'en to the tomb perchance they'll follow us.
It seems as tho' the dire decree of Heav'n
Would brand the incest of our parents thus,
And in our persons let the world behold
The blackest hues of hatred as of love.
Whilst I await his coming, Creon, now,
Think not I hate him less, than I have done :
The nearer his approach, more odious he,
And my abhorrence must before his eyes
Break forth ; I would not have him quit his claim,
He must be made to fly, not thus retire.
I will have no half-measures for my hate,
I dread his friendship more than all his wrath.
To give my animosity full scope,
I'd have his rage at least sanction my own ;
And, since my heart cannot betray itself,
To hate him freely, I would have him show
Hatred for me. His rage is still the same,
As you will see ; still covets he the crown ;
Still curses me for keeping him therefrom ;
More easy he to be subdued than won.

CREON.

• Subdue him then, my lord, if he remains
 Stubborn; however arrogant he be,
 He's not invincible; and, when his heart
 Is deaf to reason, prove what can be done
 By your resistless sword; tho' I love peace,
 I will be first to take up arms again;
 I ask'd for their suspension it is true,
 But more I wish that you should ever reign.
 Rather may war blaze forth and never end,
 Than Polynices should return with peace;
 Let others boast her charms, I scorn them then;
 War's honours please me, so we lose not you.
 Thebes by my mouth implores you, crush us not
 Beneath the heel of that ferocious prince:
 She yearns, like me, for peace, if possible;
 But, if you love her, grant her chief desire,—
 To keep her king. Yet to your brother give
 A patient ear; and, if you can, conceal
 Your wrath—but someone comes.

Scene 2.

ETEOCLES, CREON, ATTALUS.

ETEOCLES.

Are they at hand?

Will they come, Attalus?

ATTALUS.

Yea, Sire, they're here.

And, meeting first the Princess and the Queen,
 To the next chamber will proceed anon.

ETEOCLES.

Well, let them enter. Waiting which approach,
 My wrath grows hot. How we do hate a foe
 When he is near us!

CREON.

Ah! he comes

(*Aside.*) Fulfil
My efforts, Fortune; madden both with rage!

Scene 3.

JOCASTA, ETEOCLES, POLYNICES, ANTIGONE, HÆMON,
CREON.

JOCASTA.

Thus are my wishes crown'd with glad success,
Since Heav'n has brought you both together here.
After two years of absence, each beholds
Once more a brother, in this palace where
Your days began; and I, beyond my hopes
Made happy, may embrace you both at once.
Henceforth, my Sons, dwell thus in unity,
Owning the bonds of brotherhood, and trace
Each in the other's countenance his own;
But to judge better, take a nearer view;
Heed the strong tie that kindred blood proclaims.
Come, Eteocles; and Polynices, come,
Approach each other.—What! you both draw back?
Why this cold greeting? Why these dark'ning frowns?
Is it that each, with mind irresolute,
Waits till his brother makes the first advance,
(Deeming it generous to be last to yield,)
So both refuse to offer an embrace?
What strange ambition this, that but to crime
Aspires, confounding honour with revenge!
This shameful strife should make the victor blush,
The noblest will be first to own defeat.
Which has the greater courage, show me now
By being first to triumph over rage,—
What! neither stirs! Let Polynices give
A friendly greeting; coming from afar,
You should begin; embrace your brother now,
And show him—

ETEOCLES.

Madam, little boots it thus
To mask the truth ; such greetings are misplaced,
Let him explain, speak, and resolve my doubts.

POLYNICES.

What ! Have I yet to make my wishes known ?
Surely the past has made them manifest :
Has not the blood in many a conflict shed
Declared sufficiently my claim to reign ?

ETEOCLES.

These self-same battles, and that blood, outpour'd
So oft upon the crimson-mantle'd earth,
Have told full plainly that the throne is mine,
And, while I live, cannot to you belong.

POLYNICES.

You hold your seat unjustly, as you know.

ETEOCLES.

Wrong suits me well, so I but banish you.

POLYNICES.

Tho' you refuse to leave it, yet therefrom
You'll be perchance thrown down.

ETEOCLES.

And if I fall,
'Tis like you'll share my ruin.

JOCASTA.

Ah ! to find
Blasted such budding hopes ! Was it for this
I urged so oft this fatal interview,
Inflaming discord ? Is this then to treat
Of terms of peace ? Drive out your deadly thoughts ;
And, in the name of Heav'n, forget your wrath.

Is it your mother arms your hands anew?
Here you are met, not on the bloody field,
But in your home, my Sons, where you were born:
At each familiar sight subdue your rage,
Nbr let your common birthplace lack respect;
All that is here speaks but of peace and love;
These princes and your sister blame your strife,
Nor least myself, who ever have for you
Suffer'd and toil'd, and would, to quell your feud,
Give up—

They turn their heads and heed me not!
Alas for stubborn hearts as hard as stone!
The voice of Nature meets no echo there!
(To POLYNICES.) And you, whom I supposed of milder
mood,—

POLYNICES.

I only claim what he has promised me,
For he is perjured if he reigns alone.

JOCASTA.

Untemper'd justice oft is injury.
I cannot contradict your right to rule;
But you upset the throne you fain would mount.
Are you not weary of this frightful war?
Would you lay waste this land without remorse,
And to obtain the kingdom ruin it?
Is it then o'er the dead you wish to reign?
Thebes has good cause to dread that prince's sway
Who floods her fair domains with streams of blood:
Will she obey one who has wrong'd her thus?
You are her tyrant ere you are her king.
Ah! to grow great means oftentimes to grow worse,
And virtue wanes when sovereignty is won.
Raised to the throne, alas, what will you be,
Since you are cruel now, debarr'd from pow'r?

POLYNICES.

If I am cruel, 'tis by stern constraint;
I am not master of the deeds I do.
I see myself with shame forced to commit

Acts most abhorrent, and the people's fear
Is all unjust. No longer will I wound
My country's peace, her groans afflict my soul.
Too copious streams of guiltless blood have flow'd
Incessant; I must heal her miseries;
Nor Thebes nor Greece shall mourn or suffer more,
I will confront the author of my ills,
His blood or mine suffices for to-day.

JOCASTA.

Your brother's blood?

POLYNICES.

Yes, Madam, even his:
A fitting end to this inhuman war.
Such is the errand which has brought me here,—
To challenge you myself; nor did I dare
To speak of it to others than to you,
For any other would have blamed the thought,
And no one here have been my deputy.
So I am mine own herald. 'Tis for you
To prove that you can keep what you have seized.
Show yourself worthy of a prize so fair.

ETEOCLES.

Your challenge I accept, and that with joy,
Creon knows well it was my own desire;
It gave me less delight t' accept the throne.
You show that you deserve the diadem
Which at the point of this my sword I beg
To offer.

JOCASTA.

Hasten then, and pierce this heart,
With me commence your cruel enterprise;
Forget that it was I who gave you birth,
Remember only that your brother drew
His life from me; and, if you seek his blood,
In my unhappy bosom find its source.
I am the common enemy of both,
Being the mother of your hated foe,

Who never but for me had seen the light.
If he must die, shall I not die as well?
Nay, doubt it not, for I will share his death;
You must include us both, or neither slay.
Perfect your clemency or cruelty,
And take my life, or spare your enemy.
If Virtue charms you, and if Honour guides,
Blush, ye barbarians, at a crime like this;
Or if to each of you such sin is sweet,
Then blush, barbarians, to commit but one.
Nor is it love, indeed, that stays your hands,
If, when you seek his life, you save my own:
Your cruelty would grudge forsooth to spare
Me too, if I one moment stood between
The throne and you. Is this the way to treat
A mother?

POLYNICES.

I would spare my country.

JOCASTA.

Ay,

And kill your brother.

POLYNICES.

Nay, but punish guilt.

JOCASTA.

His blood will make you guiltier far than he.

POLYNICES.

Must then this hand of mine a traitor crown?
And must I service seek at foreign courts,
Quit my ancestral realms, a vagabond,
And pay submission to the laws he scorns?
Shall I become the victim of his greed?
What! Is the crown the heritage of crime?
Has he not set at nought each right he owes?
And while I am an exile, he is king.

JOCASTA.

But what if Argos grants you, too, a crown?

POLYNICES.

Am I to seek elsewhere what right of birth
Bestows? And, craving his alliance, bring
Nothing myself, but owe to his good will
All future rank, banish'd from mine own throne,
And suing humbly to a foreign prince?
No, no, I cannot cringe to pay him court.
To whom I owe my life will I too owe
My sceptre.

JOCASTA.

From the father of your bride,
Or from your own, you may accept the gift
As one of equal price.

POLYNICES.

They differ much,
One makes me king, the other but a slave.
What! Shall my greatness be a woman's work?
Thereat my very soul might blush with shame.
Shall then I owe my sceptre to my love,
And only as a bridegroom reign a king?
Nay, my own right shall raise me to the throne,
Or I renounce it. With unborrow'd pow'r,
Let mine be sole command, hated perchance,
Yet well obey'd, if not for love, from fear.
In fine, I will be master of my fate,
And scorn to wear a crown that is not mine.
My birth entitles me to reign, or else
I wish no succour but my own right arm.

JOCASTA.

Do more, my son, hold fast this bold resolve,
And let your arm alone your fortune win;
Disdain the steps that other sovereigns tread,
And let your own hands carve the way that leads
To greatness. Crown yourself with famous deeds,

And be your diadem the victor's bays ;
Conquer and reign ; let martial glory add
New lustre to the purple that kings wear.
What ! Can my son's ambition be content
To wield the sceptre each alternate year ?
Let that brave heart, which nothing can subdue,
Seek for some throne which you may mount alone :
Thousands there are 'mid which your sword may choose,
But stain not this one with a brother's blood.
Your triumphs then will bring your mother joy,
And e'en your rival aid your victories.

POLYNICES.

Would you that I, flatter'd with these vain dreams,
Leave a usurper on my father's throne ?

JOCASTA.

If you, indeed, wish him such grievous ill,
Raise him yourself to this ill-omen'd throne,
So plunge him in a deep abyss of woe ;
For baleful lightnings and the curse of crime
Beset it. Yea, your father and his sires,
Soon as they mounted, saw themselves cast down.

POLYNICES.

What tho' I meet the thunderbolts of Heav'n,
Rather mount there than crawl upon the ground.
My heart is envious of such misery,
Eager to rise, e'en if to fall with them.

ETEOCLES.

Nay, I will spare you such a fruitless fate.

POLYNICES.

Your ruin, trust me, shall precede my own.

JOCASTA.

My Son, the people love his rule.

POLYNICES.

To me

'Tis hateful.

JOCASTA.

They support him.

POLYNICES.

And the gods

Back me.

ETEOCLES.

Not so, 'tis they forbid your quest,
Since they have giv'n to me this sceptre first;
And, when they made the choice, they knew full well
That he who once is king would king remain.
No realm can brook two masters; and one throne,
How great soe'er, will grant them scanty room;
Each will be cumber'd by his second self,
And one ere long must find himself upset.
You see how I abhor this impious wretch,
Then judge how I can let him share my crown.

POLYNICES.

And I, so hateful are you, wish no more
To share with you the light that's free to all.

JOCASTA.

Go, kill each other then, I stay you not,
But rather urge you to these savage lists;
Since all my efforts can effect no change,
Why tarry longer? Wreak your wild revenge.
Surpass, if possible, your fathers' crimes;
By mutual slaughter show your brotherhood;
Your life, bestow'd thro' guilt of deepest dye,
Must be by no less wickedness cut off.
Why should I blame the fury that goads on
My sons, for I have ceased to pity them?
Yea, they have taught this heart to turn to stone,
And I will teach the cruel how to die.

Scene 4.

ANTIGONE, ETEOCLES, POLYNICES, HÆMON, CREON.

ANTIGONE.

Mother—

Ah, what is this? Can nothing touch
Their hearts?

HÆMON.

No, nor their savage purpose shake.

ANTIGONE.

My brothers—

ETEOCLES.

Come then, let us choose our ground.

POLYNICES.

Yea, with all speed.

Sister, farewell!

ETEOCLES.

Sweet Princess!

Good-bye,

ANTIGONE.

Stop, my Brothers! Let the guards
Hold them perforce; join all your pains to mine;
'Tis to be cruel to show false respect.

HÆMON.

Dear Lady, nothing more can stop them now.

ANTIGONE.

Ah, noble Hæmon, 'tis to you I turn,
And only you. If still you love me, still
Love goodness, and can fratricide prevent,
To save me from despair, these wretches save.

ACT V.

Scene 1.

ANTIGONE.

What wilt thou do, unfortunate Princess ?

Now that these arms have clasp'd a mother dead ?

Canst thou not follow where her feet have led,

And end, with life, this burden of distress ?

Wilt thou reserve thyself for future woe ?

Full soon the fatal issue shalt thou know

Of those fell arms thy brothers wield in fight.

Their fierce example whets the knife for thee ;

While thou art shedding tears in piteous plight,

They shed each other's blood with savage glee.

What limit is there to my woes but death ?

Ah, whither else can grief like mine repair ?

Life or the grave ! A mother calls me there,

A lover here would keep my vital breath ;

In the dark underworld for me she waits ;

Love interdicts what reason best dictates,

For death I cease to long.

What motives bid me die this very hour !

Yet ties to life how strong,

When love exerts his pow'r !

Yes, love forbids my soul to wing her flight ;

The victor's voice is one I know full well :

Tho' hope is dead, no more with me to dwell,

Thou livest, and would'st have me share this plight ;

Thou say'st that I shall draw thee to my grave,

That, if I love thee still, I ought to save

Life's torch alight for thee.

Hæmon, thou see'st how thou my heart canst move,

Tho' death seem sweet to me,

I live for thee and love.

If e'er thou doubtedst of my faithful flame—

But fatal tidings, lo, Olympia brings !

Scene 2.

ANTIGONE, OLYMPIA.

ANTIGONE.

Well, dear Olympia, have you seen this crime

OLYMPIA.

Hastening in vain, I came when all was o'er,
Down from our ramparts saw the people run,
Some weeping, others calling out to arms;
And in a word to tell what caus'd their fear,—
The King is dead, his brother's sword has won.
Of Hæmon too they tell, how with stout heart
Long he endeavour'd to hold back their rage,
But all his efforts fail'd to win success.
Such was the drift of many a vague report.

ANTIGONE.

Yes, I am sure that Hæmon's generous heart
Ever abhorr'd such signal wickedness :
Oft I implored him to prevent this crime,
And know he would have done it if he could.
But, ah, their fury would not brook control,
Eager to quench its fire in streams of blood.
Now, savage Princes, ye are satisfied,
For Death alone could peace between you bring.
Ye thought the throne too strait to hold you both
(No distance that could part you seem'd enough),
And wish'd that Heav'n, to make your quarrel cease,
Might leave one living and the other dead.
Worthy of pity, both, a hapless pair!
Yet are ye less unhappy than myself,
As being all unconscious of those ills
That fell upon you, while I feel them all!

OLYMPIA.

But your misfortune were more hard to bear,
Had Polynices been the prey of Death ;

He was the object that engross'd your care,
The welfare of the King touch'd you far less.

ANTIGONE.

'Tis true, I lov'd him with a love sincere,
More fondly than his brother. Why was this?
What gave him the warm wishes of my heart?
He was both blameless and unfortunate,
But, ah, that generous spirit lives no more,
'Tis crime that sets the crown upon his head:
His brother now commands more sympathy,
Grown dearer since the Fates have proved unkind.

OLYMPIA.

See, Creon comes.

ANTIGONE.

Downcast, as well may be:
The King being dead, he fears the victor's wrath.
His evil counsel has bred all these woes.

Scene 3.

ANTIGONE, CREON, OLYMPIA, ATTALUS, GUARDS.

CREON.

What heard I, Madam, as I enter'd here?
True is it that the Queen—?

ANTIGONE.

Yes, she is dead.

CREON.

Great gods! In what strange fashion was the torch
At last extinguish'd of a life so sad?

OLYMPIA.

Her grave she open'd for herself, my lord;
She seized a dagger, and one moment more
Saw her days ended and her woes as well.

ANTIGONE.

Nay stay'd to know that she had lost a son.

CREON.

Ah Madam, 'tis too true the angry gods—

ANTIGONE.

Charge with my brother's death yourself alone,
Nor for your deeds accuse the wrath of Heav'n.
'Twas you who brought this fatal conflict on:
He trusted your advice, and so he died:
Thus kings become victims of flatterers,
Who lead them to destruction, while they fan
Their passions. Ye it is that hurl them down;
But in their fall they drag their flatterers
Behind them, as is now the case with you.
His ruin brings us sorrow, you disgrace:
The wrath of Heav'n has link'd your fate with his,
And you, perchance, must weep as well as we.

CREON.

Too true, alas! for cruel Destiny
Makes you lament two brothers, me two sons.

ANTIGONE.

Two brothers, and two sons! What mean your words?
Did Eteocles then perish not alone?

CREON.

What! have you yet to hear this tale of blood?

ANTIGONE.

I know of Polynices' victory,
How Hæmon's efforts made to part them fail'd.

CREON.

That duel had result more terrible.
My losses and your own you know not yet,
But now shall learn them both. Woe worth the day!

ANTIGONE.

Stern Destiny, accomplish thy revenge!
Oh, surely this must be thy final stroke!

CREON.

Madam, you saw with what impetuous rage
The princes went to take each other's life,
How forth they rush'd, with equal ardour fired,
And hearts that ne'er agreed so well before;
Each thirsting, panting for the other's blood,
Their hatred bound them closer than their birth,
And seem'd to reconcile their enmity;
When eager most to slay, appearing friends.
First did they choose their ground whereon to fight,
Near either camp, and underneath the wall.
'Twas there, recovering their fatal wrath,
The horrid conflict they at last began.
With threatening gestures and an eye of flame,
They sought a passage thro' each other's breast;
Then quick as lightning fell their furious strokes,
Till both seem'd fain t' outstrip the feet of Death.
My son, who sigh'd with sorrow in his soul,
Bearing in mind your orders, fair Princess,
Between them ran, despising for your sake
Their strict commands that kept us all aloof.
He push'd them back, and, praying, held their arms,
Exposing to their frenzy his own life,
So he might part them, but he strove in vain,
For ever they renew'd their close attack.
But still with heart undaunted he persists,
And turns aside a thousand rattling blows,
Till the King's weapon with too cruel thrust,
(If aim'd at him or not I cannot tell.)
Stretches my son, expiring, at his feet.

ANTIGONE.

And me my sorrow leaves e'en yet alive!

CREON.

I ran to raise and take him in my arms;

He knew his father's voice, and whisper'd low :—
“ For my dear mistress I meet death with joy,
Your anxious love hastes to my help in vain ;
These madmen more than I your succour need,
Part them, my Father, and leave me to die.”

Thus speaking, he expired. That piteous sight
Check'd not the darkening tempest of their wrath,
And only Polynices seem'd to feel
Compassion's touch.

“ Wait, Hæmon,” he exclaim'd,
“ And you shall be avenged ! ”

Grief gave his rage
New strength, and soon to his advantage turn'd
The tide of battle. Wounded in the side,
The King fell vanquish'd, weltering in his blood.

Transported with their feelings, either host
Resign'd itself to sorrow or to joy ;
And Thebes, alarm'd at her disastrous loss,
Gazed from her ramparts with expectant fears.
Then Polynices felt triumphant pride,
Viewing his dying victim with delight,
And seem'd as 't were to drink his brother's blood.
“ The grave,” quoth he, “ is yours, and mine the throne
See in my hands the sceptre and the palm !
Go to the world below,—there blush with shame
At my success. To vex your dying hour
Yet more, think, traitor, that you die my slave.”

He spake, and, with a gesture of disdain
Approaching where the King lay in the dust,
Stretch'd forth his arm to take the other's sword.
The King, tho' seeming dead, his steps had watch'd,
Biding his time, and his indignant soul
Was, as it were, arrested in its flight
By that grand passion for revenge, which still
Flatter'd his hopes and his last sigh delay'd.
The struggling spark of life, too well conceal'd,
Ensnared his conqueror to a fatal doom ;
For at the instant when that savage brother
Essay'd to wrest his weapon from his hand,
He pierced his rival's heart ; and his glad soul
With this its final effort left the world.

From stricken Polynices rose a cry
Of anguish, and his angry soul forth fled
To Hades. But dark wrath upon his brow
Was branded, tho' it wore death's pallid hue,
As threatening, one would say, his brother still,
More grim than ever, and more terrible.

* ANTIGONE.

Fatal ambition, blinded by the gods!
Clear sequel of a cruel oracle!
Alone of royal blood we two are left,
And would to Heav'n that life was only yours,
And that despair, more speedy than its wrath,
Had made my mother's death prelude my own!

CREON.

'Tis true the flaming fury of the gods
Seems to have spent itself in dealing forth
Destruction on our house; their wrath has overwhelm'd
My soul, no less than it has tortured you.
They've robb'd me of my sons—

ANTIGONE.

And giv'n a throne
A worthy recompense for Hæmon's loss.
But prithee let me mourn in solitude,
Nor seek the course of sadness to restrain,
As well might all my sorrows pass to you;
Far sweeter entertainment will you find
Elsewhere; the throne awaits you, and the voice
Of Thebes invites. Taste the fresh draught of pow'r
Farewell. Our feelings are in ill accord:
I fain would weep, and you would reign a king.

CREON (*stopping* ANTIGONE).

Ah, Madam, be a queen, and mount the throne;
For this high rank belongs to none but you.

ANTIGONE.

Much rather, Creon, would I have you there,
The crown is yours.

CREON.

I lay it at your feet.

ANTIGONE.

I would refuse it if the gods themselves
Should offer it, and dare you to present
The crown to me?

CREON.

Its glory in my eyes
Grows pale before the honour I should feel
In homage to your beauty. Well I know
Myself unworthy, but if I may claim
Such high distinction, if illustrious deeds
May merit it, what must I do?

ANTIGONE.

As I

Shall teach you.

CREON.

What, indeed, to win such grace
Would be too much! But issue your commands
And I am ready.

ANTIGONE (*going away*).

We shall see.

CREON (*following her*).

I wait

Your bidding here.

ANTIGONE (*going away*).

Remain.

Scene 4.

CREON, ATTALUS, GUARDS.

ATTALUS.

Assuaged? Think you to bend her will?
 Say, is her wrath

CREON.

'Tis done.

Dear Attalus; no fortune equals mine.
 You shall behold in me this happy day
 Ambition throned and love supremely blest.
 I ask'd of Heav'n the sceptre and her hand,
 And graciously the gods have granted both.
 To crown my head, and give my flame success,
 Hatred no less than love they arm to-day,
 Kindling two passions which, tho' contrary,
 Aid me alike, in her a tenderness
 Which overcomes her late severity,
 Aid in her brothers wrath implacable,
 Opening the way to sovereignty for me,
 As to her heart—

ATTALUS.

All smiles propitiously;
 And were you not a father, happiness
 Would be complete. Love and ambition find
 Full scope; but Nature needs must mourn the loss
 Of two such sons.

CREON.

Yes, it distresses me;
 I know what from a father's heart is due,
 And such was mine. But I was born to reign,
 And less I lose than what I think to win.
 The name of father, Attalus, is trite,
 A gift that Heav'n bestows on almost all;
 A happiness so common I can slight,
 Compared with what will make all envious.
 A throne is not a boon of which the gods

Are prodigal; it parts us from the herd
 Of mortals; few are honour'd with a dow'r
 So precious. Earth has fewer kings than Heav'n
 Has gods. Besides, you know how Hæmon loved
 The Princess, and his passion was return'd;
 His suit, if he had lived, had ruin'd mine.
 The gods bereave me of a son, but thus
 They rid me of a rival. Speak of joy,
 And not of sorrow; leave my raptures free
 From sad remembrance of the shades of death.
 Tell me of what I gain, not what I lose.
 Speak of the throne, already mine,—of her
 Whose heart will follow, fair Antigone.
 All that is past is but a dream to me;
 So late a father and a subject, now
 A bridegroom and a king; so sweet a change
 That—

But Olympia comes!

ATTALUS.

Ah, and in tears!

Scene 5.

CREON, OLYMPIA, ATTALUS, GUARDS.

OLYMPIA.

Whom wait you, Sire? The Princess is no more.

CREON

No more, Olympia?

OLYMPIA

Vain is all regret.
 She had but reach'd the chamber next to this,
 When, ere I could perceive her fell design,
 Boldly she plunged into her beauteous breast
 The self-same dagger which had slain the Queen
 Therewith a mortal wound did she inflict.

And, faint with loss of blood, fell suddenly,
Judge what my horror must have been to see
That sight ; her soul was ready to take wing,
But first she murmur'd,—“ 'Tis for you I die,
Dear Hæmon,”—and life ended as she spake.
Cold in my arms I felt her lovely frame,
And thought my soul would quickly follow hers.
Far happier had my sorrow brought me down
To share with her the darkness of the tomb !

Scene 6.

CREON, ATTALUS, GUARDS.

CREON.

Ah, is it thus then that you flee from me,
Your hated suitor, and in cruel scorn
Could quench those lovely orbs that I adore,
And seal them close lest they should look on me.
Hæmon you loved, but less to follow him
Than to escape from me, such haste to die !
And yet, tho' thus severe you may remain,
Hating my image e'en amongst the shades,
Letting your wrath outlive the breath of life,
I am resolved to follow where you lead ;
There shall my odious presence vex you still,
Incessant sighs to you repeat my pain,
Which, if they cannot melt you, must torment,
No longer hoping for escape by death.
Let me then die—

ATTALUS (*snatching his sword away from him*).

A cruel wish, my lord !

CREON.

Nay, yours the cruelty who murder me
By saving life ! Come to my succour, love ;
Come rage and fury, end my hateful days !

Baffle those cruel friends that keep me here !
Fulfil your oracles, ye gods, yourselves !
Last relic of ill-fated Laius, I
Must perish, or your words be proved untrue ;
Take back the fatal sceptre you have giv'n ;
Antigone is gone, take all the rest :
I scorn your presents, and reject the throne.
The lightning's stroke is all I ask of you.
If deaf to pray'r, grant what my crimes demand,
And add another victim to your heap.

Vainly I sue, my own iniquities
Bring down upon my head the ills I caused.
Jocasta, and her sons, Antigone,
My children, whom my fierce ambition slew,
And all the others whom I sacrificed,
Already like dire Furies rend my heart.
Cease—

By my death your wrongs shall be avenged ;
The lightning falls, the earth has open'd wide ;
I feel a thousand torments all at once,
And go to find repose in Tartarus.

(He falls into the arms of the guards.)

ALEXANDER THE GREAT.

A TRAGEDY.

INTRODUCTION TO ALEXANDER THE GREAT.

THE story of this drama is derived from Quintus Curtius, Plutarch, and Justin. The real hero is Porus rather than Alexander; and when it was first acted in 1665, mention is made of it under the former title. Racine himself writes thus:—"I have endeavoured to represent in Porus an enemy worthy of Alexander; and I may say that his character has met with a high degree of public favour, and some have even censured me for making this prince greater than Alexander. But such persons forget that in virtue of his victory Alexander is really greater than Porus, that every line of the tragedy reflects his praises, and that even the invectives of Porus and Axiana are so many tributes to the conqueror's valour. There is perhaps in Porus something that interests us more, from the very circumstance of his misfortunes; for, as Seneca has remarked, 'we are naturally disposed to admire nothing in the world so much as a man who can bear adversity with courage.'"

CHARACTERS.

ALEXANDER.

PORUS, }
TAXILES, } *Indian Kings.*

AXIANA, *Queen of another part of India.*

CLEOPHILA, *sister of Taxiles.*

HEPHÆSTION.

Attendants of ALEXANDER.

The scene is laid on the banks of the Hydaspes, in the
camp of Taxiles.

ALEXANDER THE GREAT.

.4 TRAGEDY.

ACT I.

Scene 1.

TAXILES, CLEOPHILA.

CLEOPHILA.

What! go you to resist a king whose might
Seems to force Heav'n itself to take his side,
Before whose feet have fallen all the kings
Of Asia, who holds Fortune at his beck?
Open your eyes, my brother, and behold
In Alexander one who casts down thrones,
Binds kings in chains, and makes whole nations slaves
And all the ills they have incurr'd prevent.

TAXILES.

Would you that, stricken with so mean a fear
I bow my head to meet his threat'ning yoke,
And hear it said by every Indian tribe,
I forged the fetters for myself and them?
Shall I leave Porus, and betray those chiefs
Met to defend the freedom of our realms,
Who without hesitation have declared
Their brave resolve to live or die like kings?
See you a single one of them so cow'd
At Alexander's name, that he forgets
To fight, and begs to be enroll'd his slave,

As of th' acknowledg'd master of the world ?
So far from being daunted at his fame,
They will attack him e'en in Victory's lap.
And would you, sister, have me crave his help
Whom I to-day am ready to withstand ?

CLEOPHILA.

Nay, is it not to you this prince appeals,
Sues for your friendship, and for yours alone,
And, ready to discharge his lightning flash,
Makes secret efforts to protect your head ?

TAXILES.

Why should he spare his wrath for me alone ?
Of all Hydaspes arms against him, how
Have I deserved a pity that insults ?
Why not to Porus make these overtures ?
Doubtless he deems him too magnanimous
To heed an offer that is fraught with shame,
And, seeking virtue of less stubborn mould,
Thinks me, forsooth, more worthy of his care.

CLEOPHILA.

Say not he thinks to find in you a slave,
But deems you bravest of his enemies,
And hopes that, may he but disarm your hand,
His triumph o'er the rest will be secured.
His choice does no discredit to your name,
He offers friendship cowards may not share.
Tho' he would fain see all the world submit
To him, he wants no slave among his friends.
Ah, if his friendship can your glory soil,
You spared me not a stain of deeper dye.
You know his daily services to me,
Why did you ne'er attempt to check their course ?
You see me now the mistress of his heart,
A hundred secret missives make me sure
Of his devotion, and to reach me come
His ardent sighs across two hostile camps.
Instead of urging hatred and disdain,

You oft have blamed me for severity ;
You led me on to listen to his suit,
Ay, and perchance to love him in my turn.

TAXILES.

You have no need to blush that charms so rare
Have forced that mighty warrior to succumb,
Nor should it cause alarm that he whose pow'r
Has dried Euphrates, can disarm your heart.
But with my destiny our country's fate
Is link'd, and it must follow as I lead ;
And tho' you fain would turn me from the task,
I must be free to guard her liberties.
I know how this my purpose gives you pain,
But I, like you, follow the star of love.
Fair Axiana's danger-darting eyes,
Against your Alexander aim their shafts ;
Queen of all hearts, she bids her subjects arm
For freedom, which her charms alone must bind ;
She hears with shame threats of captivity,
Nor brooks another tyrant than herself.
Her wrath, my sister, must command my sword,
And I must go.

CLEOPHILA.

Ah, well, destroy yourself
To please her ; what tho' fatal the decree,
Obey so dear a despot if you will,
Or rather let your rival reap your bays.
Go fight for Porus, Axiana calls,
Secure for him the empire of her heart,
For your best valour will not make her bend.

TAXILES.

Think you that Porus, sister—

CLEOPHILA.

Can you doubt,
Yourself, that Axiana loves him ? What !
Can you not see how eager is her praise,

As she parades his deeds before your eyes?
 Tho' others may be brave, round him alone,
 Believe me, victory's pinions seem to wave;
 Without his sanction vain your wisest plans,
 Only with him rests India's liberty;
 Had he not interposed, our walls ere now
 Had sunk in ashes, he alone can stop
 The conqueror's march; this charming prince she makes
 Her god, and, tho' you doubt it, fain would make
 Her lover!

TAXILES.

I have tried to doubt it; ah,
 Be not so cruel as to blast all hope,
 Nor paint a picture that I hate to see.
 Nay, help me rather to be blind, confirm
 My pleasing error. Pride befits the fair;
 Tell me she treats all others e'en as me,
 And save me from despair.

CLEOPHILA.

With my consent
 Hope still, but nothing more expect from sighs
 Too weak to move her. Why in battle seek
 A conquest Alexander offers you
 Himself? 'Tis not with him you have to cope,
 But Porus, who would wrest a prize so fair.
 False, too unjust to others' merit, vaunts
 His exploits, none but his, forgets the rest;
 Whatever is done, he the sole credit claims,
 And leads you like his subjects to the field.
 Ah, if that title has a pleasing sound,
 Why not with Greeks and Persians range yourself
 Beneath a worthier lord? A hundred kings
 Will share your bonds; Porus himself will come,
 Yea, the whole world. But Alexander keeps
 No chains for you. He leaves upon your brow
 The crown a haughty rival dares disdain.
 'Tis Porus and not he makes you a slave;
 Be not his victim, when 'tis in your power—
 But look, here comes your generous rival.

TAXILES.

Ah,

My sister, how my heart beats an alarm,
And tells me, as I look, that he is loved !

CLEOPHILA.

Time presses. Fare you well. With you it lies
To be his slave, or Alexander's friend.

Scene 2.

PORUS, TAXILES.

PORUS.

Sir, I am much deceived, or our proud foes
Will make less progress than they reckon'd on.
Impatient of delay, our gallant troops
Show resolution stamp'd upon their brows.
Strengthen each other's hearts, and none too young
To promise to himself victorious bays.
From rank to rank the martial ardour spreads,
And eager cries have burst upon mine ears,
Complaining that they cannot prove their zeal,
But waste their vigour in an idle camp.
Shall we allow such courage to be lost ?
Our wily foe knows where advantage lies ;
Feeling himself still weak, to hold us back
He sends Hephæstion hither, who demands
A parley, that by idle words—

TAXILES.

'Tis fit

To hear him, Sir ; we know not yet what terms
Are offer'd ; Alexander may wish peace.

PORUS.

Peace ! Would you then accept it at his hands ?
Have we not seen him with repeated blows

Disturb the happy calm we erst enjoy'd,
And, sword in hand, enter these realms of ours,
Attacking kings who ne'er offended him ?
Have we not s^een him laying countries waste,
Our rivers swollen with our subjects' blood ?
Yet when the gods have placed him in our pow'r,
Am I to wait until the tyrant deigns
To pardon ?

TAXILES.

Say not Heav'n forsakes his cause ;
With constant care it still defends his head
A monarch at whose nod so many states
Tremble is not a foe for kings to scorn.

PORUS.

I scorn him not, his courage I admire,
And to his prowess render due respect ;
But I too am ambitious to deserve
The tribute which his merits force from m^e.
Let Alexander be upraised to Heav'n,
Yet will I pluck him thence, if so I may ;
The altars which men's trembling hands have rear'd
To this terrestrial god, will I attack.
E'en thus did Alexander treat those kings
Whose provinces now own his greater sway :
If when he enter'd Asia he had quail'd,
Darius would not with his parting breath
Have hail'd him king.

TAXILES.

Sir, had Darius known
How weak he was, he would be reigning now
Where reigns another. But his fatal pride
Was better founded than your present scorn.
The fame of Alexander had not yet
Burst like the lightning from behind the clouds ;
Darius ne'er had heard his name before,
And calmly dream'd of easy victory.
He knew him soon, and all amazed beheld
His countless hosts scatter'd like chaff, himself

Crush'd to the earth by a victorious arm ;
The lightning, as it fell, unseal'd his eyes.

•
PORUS.

What price too, think you, shall one have to pay
For swallowing this bait of shameful peace ?
A hundred different tribes can tell you, Sir,
How, grossly cheated, peace for them meant chains.
Be not deceived, his smiles are treacherous ;
His proffer'd friendship leads to slavery
For ever ; no half-service will avail,
Submit to bondage, or remain his foe.

TAXILES.

To turn from rashness is not cowardice ;
A harmless homage may be all he claims.
With flattering words soothe this ambitious prince,
Till lust of conquest summon him elsewhere ;
For like a mountain torrent he sweeps by,
And overwhelms all that arrests his course ;
Gorged with the wrecks of many multitudes,
The roar of mighty waters fills the world.
What boots it to let surly pride provoke
His wrath ? With favorable welcome hail
His march, and waive those rights we may resume
Hereafter, nor refuse what costs us nought.

•
PORUS.

What costs us nought ! Dare you believe it, Sir ?
And shall I count as nothing honour lost ?
The coward's brand is far too dear a price
At which we may redeem our diadems !
But think you that a prince so bold and proud
Can pass this way and leave no trace behind ?
How many monarchs, wreck'd upon this reef,
Retain their titles but to please his pride !
Should we once crouch, his vassals, we should find
Our crowns no more sit firmly on our heads :
Should we displease him, from our nerveless hands
Would drop our sceptres at his slightest breath.

Say not, he marches on from land to land,
 And leaves them as they were; the knots he tie
 Bind princes fast; and ofttimes in the dust
 He seeks fit instruments to govern slaves.
 But such mean cares touch not my firm resolve,
 Your interest alone inspires my words:
 Porus declines to treat of terms of peace,
 When Glory speaks no other voice he hears.

TAXILES.

I hear what Honour bids, as well as you,
 To save my country is what she commands.

PORUS.

Save her and honour too. This day forestall
 Th' invader, let us march to meet his arms.

TAXILES.

Contempt and Rashness are unfaithful guides.

PORUS.

Shame follows hard upon a timid soul.

TAXILES.

Kings who can save their subjects earn their love.

PORUS.

But honour'd more when they know how to reign.

TAXILES.

Such counsel finds response from pride alone.

PORUS.

Yet kings will heed it, ay, and queens, perchance.

TAXILES.

The queen has eyes, it seems, for none but you.

PORUS.

A slave she marks with anger and contempt.

TAXILES.

But think you, sir, 'tis Love that would expose
Her people and herself along with you?
Nay, tell yourself the naked truth, confess
Your guiding light is Hatred and not Love.

PORUS.

I feadily will own that righteous wrath
Makes me love war as much as you love peace,
That burning with a noble fire I go
To measure swords 'gainst Alexander's pride.
The praises of his valour vex my soul,
Which long has panted for this happy day.
Ere he was on my track my spirit rose
Resentful, and in secret hated him.
With keen impatience and fierce jealousy,
I thought his near approach too long delay'd,
And drew him hither with such warm desire
As made me wish myself on Persian soil
To meet him sooner. Should he balk me now,
And seek to leave these regions, then would I
Dispute in arms his passage, and refuse
The peace he condescends to offer us.

TAXILES.

So high a spirit and so firm a heart
Augur a glorious place in History's page;
And should you sink beneath the bold attempt,
Your fall at least will thro' the world resound.
Farewell. The queen draws near. Display that zeal,
That pride which makes your merit in her eyes.
My presence would disturb your interview,
And my faint-hearted prudence raise a blush.

Scene 3.

PORUS, AXIANA.

AXIANA.

What! Taxiles avoids me! Why is this?—

PORUS.

Ah, he does well to hide from you his shame
 No longer daring to encounter risk,
 How could he bear to look you in the face?
 But let us leave him, madam, to his choice;
 He and his sister go to pay their vows
 To Alexander. Let us leave a camp
 Where Taxiles, with incense in his hand,
 Awaits his reception.

AXIANA.

But what says he, Sir

PORUS.

Betrays too much. Already does this slave
 Boast of the bondage he would have me share.

AXIANA.

Be not so passionate, and let me try
 To stop him. Tho' discouraged, his warm sig
 Assure me of his love. Howe'er that be,
 Let me try speech with him again, nor force
 That purpose into action by your scorn
 Which hardly can be sold.

PORUS.

What! Doubt you that?
 And will you trust a faithless lover's heart
 Who to a tyrant means, this very day,
 To give you up, thinking thereby to win
 Your hand from him? Well, if you will, assist

Your own betrayal. He may seize the prize
I deem'd my own, but still it shall be mine
To fight and die for you ; this glory mocks
His jealous efforts.

AXIANA.

Think you then, my love
Shall be the meed of insolence so base,
And that my heart, submitting to his sway,
Could e'er consent to be disposed of thus ?
Can you impute such crime without a blush ?
When have I shown him partiality ?
Were I to choose 'tween Taxiles and you,
How can you think that I could hesitate ?
Know I not well how his unstable soul
Is sway'd alternately by love and fear ?
And were it not for me, his timid heart
Would soon be vanquish'd by his sister's wiles.
Made Alexander's captive, as you know,
She afterwards, return'd to Taxiles ;
But soon I found she meant to fasten him
In the same trap which had ensnared her heart.

PORUS.

And can you live beside her after that ?
Why not abandon her to guilt and crime ?
Why be so anxious now to spare a prince—

AXIANA.

For your sake I would win him. Shall I see
You overwhelm'd with care for our defence,
And left alone t' attack so strong a foe ?
I would have Taxiles combine his arms
With yours, in spite of all his sister's plots.
Would that your zeal could spare some thought for me !
But such considerations are too mean
To move you. So that you may nobly fall,
You little care what follows, nor provide
Refuge for me from Alexander's wrath,
Or from your rival's love, who, treating me
Soon as his humble captive, will demand

My heart and hand as purchased by your blood.
Well, go, my lord, fulfil your eager wish,
Think only of the conflict, and forget
To guard your life, forget how Heav'n had smooth'd
The way that might have led to happiness.
It may be Axiana in her turn
Was well disposed to go.

But nay, depart
To lead your army, we have talk'd too long,
And you are weary of detainment here

PORUS.

Stay, Madam! see how earnest is my flame:
Order my life, and make my soul your own;
Glory, I own it, has much influence there,
But what can charms so matchless not perform?
I will forget what plans we form'd to join
Our forces to risk all against the foe;
That Porus deem'd it happiness supreme,
Alone to triumph in his rival's eyes.
I say no more. Proclaim your sovereign will;
And Fame and Hatred both shall bow to you

AXIANA.

Fear nought; the heart which will so well obey
Is not in hands that can betray their trust:
Its glory is too much my care to wish
To stop a hero bent on victory.
Hasten your steps to meet the enemy,
But do not part yourself from your allies:
Control them gently; and with tranquil mind
Leave me to try my skill on Taxiles;
Let milder sentiments tow'rd's him prevail,
I undertake to make him fight for you.

PORUS.

Well, go then, Madam, I consent with joy:
And let us see Hephæstion since we must,
But without losing hope of following close,
I wait Hephæstion—then the battle-field.

ACT II.

Scene 1.

CLEOPHILA, HEPHÆSTION.

HEPHÆSTION.

Yes, while your kings together hold debate,
Until the council meets, lady, let me
Tell you what secret reasons bring me here.
I, as the friend to whom my lord confides
The flame which your eyes kindled, would to them
Reveal it, and entreat you to extend
To him the peace which he would grant your kings.
After so many sighs, what may he hope?
Your brother gives consent, yet you delay.
Why let your lover, doubtful and perplex'd,
His heart ne'er offer but with constant dread
Of your refusal? Must he at your feet
Lay all the world that's left?

Give peace? Make war?

Which shall it be? Command!

His feet will run,

By conquest or by merit to prevail.

CLEOPHILA.

May I believe a prince of fame so high
Still keeps the memory of my feeble charms?
That he who makes Terror and Victory
His followers should condescend to sigh
For me? Such captives break their chain full soon;
To grandest projects Glory leads them on,
And Love within their breasts, hinder'd and crush'd
Is 'neath a weight of laurels soon o'erwhelmed.
So long as I his prisoner remain'd,
I might have made some slight impression there;
But, Sir, I fancy when he loosed my bonds
The hero in his turn soon burst his own.

HEPHESTION.

Ah, had you seen him chafing at delays,
Counting the days that kept you from his sight.
Love, you would own, was urging on his steps :
He rush'd to battle but in search of you,
'Tis you who lead the conqueror of kings
Thus thro' your provinces to march in haste.
And rend, upon his way, 'neath his strong arm
All obstacles that hinder his approach.
Now on the self-same plain our banners wave
With yours ; he views your ramparts from his own ;
But after all his exploits, fear subdues
The victor's heart lest it should still be far
From yours. His rapid strides from land to land
Have served him nought, if you against him bar
That heart, and daily doubt his constancy
T' excuse the harshness that makes no response
To faithful vows : with weapons of distrust
Your mind—

CLEOPHILA.

Alas, how weak the best defence
Against such doubts ! Our hearts we vainly vex
With reasons to suspect what most they wish.
Would your lord read the secret of my soul ?
'Tis with delight I hear how much he loves ;
I fear'd that time had made his passion ebb ;
I fain would have his heart, and that for aye.
I will say more : When he our frontier forced,
And within Omphis took me prisoner,
When I beheld him master of the world,
To be his captive seem'd a privilege,
And far from murmuring against my fate,
Its sweetness grew with custom, I will own,
Till freedom was a memory erased,
Recovery of which I claim'd, yet fear'd.
Think how I must rejoice at his return.
But would he have me see him blood besprent ?
'Comes he to show himself an enemy ?
Is't not for torture that he seeks me out ?

HEPHAESTION.

No, Madam ; vanquish'd by your potent charms,
He veils the terrors of his flashing sword,
He offers peace to kings whose eyes are blind,
The hand that could have crush'd them he withdraws.
He fears lest victory—too easy prize—
Might point his weapon to your brother's breast:
His courage shrinks from causing you a pang,
Nor covets laurels sprinkled with your tears.
Prosper the anxious care his love inspires ;
Save him from winning sorrowful success,
And influence monarchs whom his mercy spares
T' accept a boon they owe to you alone.

CLEOPHILA.

Ah, doubt it not, my agitated soul
With just alarm is ceaselessly distress'd ;
I tremble for my brother, lest his blood
Should stain the hand of enemy so dear ;
But vainly I oppose his fiery zeal,
Porus and Axiana rule his soul ;
A king's example and a queen's bright eyes
Rise up against me when I try to speak.
When harass'd thus, what have I not to dread ?
I fear for him,—for Alexander too.
I know he has destroy'd a hundred kings
Who dared defy him ; well his feats I know,
But I know Porus, under whose command
Our people have repulsed and triumph'd o'er
Scythian and Mede, and, proud of former bays,
Will follow him to victory or death.
I fear—

HEPHAESTION.

Nay, harbour not a fear so vain ;
Let Porus rush whither disaster leads,
Let India in his cause arm all her States,
And let your brother only hold aloof.
But here they come.

CLEOPHILA.

Accomplish your good work ;
Your wisdom may disperse these angry clouds,
Or, if the storm must burst, be this your care,
To make it fall on other heads than ours.

Scene 2.

PORUS, TAXILES, HEPHESTION.

HEPHESTION.

Ere the fierce conflict that looms threat'ningly
Adds to our many conquests all your States,
My lord is willing to suspend his stroke,
And for the last time offers terms of peace.
Your people, prepossess'd with flattering hopes,
The victor of Euphrates thought to stay ;
In spite of all your squadrons scatter'd wide,
Hydaspes sees at length our standards float
Along his banks, which o'er your trenches soon
Would stand, while native blood your fields bedew'd,
Did not our hero, crown'd with other bays,
Himself the ardour of his warriors check.
He comes not hither stain'd with princely gore,
By barbarous triumph to affright these realms,
And, from your ruin reaping bright renown,
O'er your kings' tombs victorious trophies raise :
But be not ye yourselves deceived by hope
Illusive, nor provoke your own defeat.
Ere his resistless hand descends in wrath,
Delay no longer, you have done enough
Already in withholding homage due,
Such as your hearts must own his valour claims :
Welcome the firm support his arm affords,
And honour the Protector of your States.
Such is the message he is pleased to send,
Ready to drop the sword or take it up.
You know his purpose, make your choice this day,
To lose your crowns, or hold them as from him.

TAXILES.

Sir, think not that a rude and sullen pride
Forbids us such rare virtue to respect,
And that our people with presumptuous zeal
Will be your enemies in spite of you.
We render to true greatness all that's meet ;
Ye worship gods that owe to us their fanes ;
Heroes who pass'd with you for mortal men
Have met with votive altars among us.
But vain would be th' attempt to make our tribes
Change their free worship into slavery.
Trust me, tho' glory moves them to adore,
No incense will they offer on constraint.
How many other States subdued by you .
Have seen their sov'reigns bend beneath the yoke ?
After all these, is it not time enough
That Alexander should look out for friends ?
These captives, trembling at their master's name,
But ill support a pow'r so newly born ;
'They have their eyes open to every chance
Of freedom ; your dominions all are full
Of hidden foes. They weep their kings discrown'd,
In secret ; and your chains, too widely stretch'd,
Grow slack ; the Scythians, mutinous at heart
Already, soon will burst the bonds to which
You destine us. Try, taking for a pledge
Our friendship, whether faith no oath constrains
Can bind us. Leave a people free who know
How freely to applaud your famous deeds.
I take your master's friendship on these terms,
And I await him as a monarch may
A hero on whose steps glory attends,
Who wins my heart, but cannot touch my throne.

PORUS.

I thought when gathering his provinces
Hydaspes saw us flocking to protect
His banks from outrage, that for task so great
There came no kings with me but such as were
The foes of tyrants, but since one is found

To lick the hand that threatens, and to court
His own disgrace, in league with Macedon,
It rests with me to speak for those whose trust
Has been betray'd by him, and in the name
Of India make reply.

Why comes he here,
The King who sends you? Do we need the aid
He offers? With what countenance can he
Presume to shelter those who have no foe
Save him alone? Ere he laid waste the world
In fury, India rested in repose,
Or if some neighbour State ruffled her calm,
She had no lack of children to defend
Her honour well. What means this fierce attack?
What barbarous deed has roused your master's wrath?
Did e'er a force of ours his realms invade,
And ravage ruthlessly those lands unknown?
So many countries, deserts, rivers lie
Between him and ourselves, as well might bar
All access. E'en on Earth's remotest verge
Can none escape the knowledge of his name
And galling chains? Strange valour must be his,
That only seeks to injure, and consumes
All that its fires approach, owning no rule
But proud disdain. He fain would make the world
One prison, all, as many as we are
Of human kind, slaves whom his foot may crush!
More lands, more kings! His sacrilegious hands
Range all men under the same iron yoke,
Already he devours us in his greed:
Of sovereigns once so many we alone
Are left to reign. What say I? We alone!
Nay, only I, in whom there yet remain
The traces of a King. But at that thought
My courage rises, and well pleased I see
This wide world shake, that by my arm alone
Its freedom may be stablish'd, if at all;
And that with peace restored, all men may say:—
"Great Alexander would have tamed the world,
Had he not met on Earth's extremest bounds,
A king who broke her chains, and set her free."

HEPHAESTION.

Your resolution shows at least a heart
Valiant, but 'tis too late t' oppose the storm.
With no support but yours, this tottering globe,
As well as you yourself, must pity claim.
I will not try to hold you back, march on
Against my master, only I could wish
You knew him better, and that Fame had told
At least the half of his achievements. You
Would see—

PORUS.

What should I see, what could I learn,
To make me fall at Alexander's feet?
Persia without an effort brought beneath
His yoke? Your arms weary with shedding blood?
What glory was it to subdue a king
Nerveless, already by soft ease enthrall'd;
To quell a nation sapless and inert,
Whose golden harness made them sweat and groan,
Who made no stand, but prostrate fell in crowds,
Till corpses only block'd your master's way?
Dazed with his least exploits, all other tribes
Came humbly on their knees to beg for terms,
And, giving heed to oracles of fear,
Thought it were impious to resist a god.
But we, who conquerors scan with other eyes,
Know well that tyrants are no deities;
So that, however slaves may flatter him,
We deem the Son of Jupiter a man.
We go not forth to strew his path with flow'rs,
And everywhere he finds us arms in hand.
He sees his conquests stopp'd each step he takes;
Here does a single rock cost him more lives,
More trouble, more assaults, almost more time
Than all the strength of Persia's serried hosts.
The ease that was her ruin is to us
Hateful, our native gold did ne'er corrupt
Our courage. Only glory tempts our hearts,
The sole possession I dispute with him.
'Tis that alone—

HEPHAESTION.

Which Alexander seeks.

To lower gains his soul is loath to stoop;
No other aim led him to leave his realms,
And to the throne of Cyrus brought his steps,
Shook the firm pillars of that mighty State,
Arm'd his attack, laid victory and crowns
At his disposal. Since your pride rejects
The proffer'd pardon glory does not grudge,
Your eyes, the witnesses of his success,
Shall, this day forth, see how he fights for fame,
And, sword in hand, marches to victory.

PORUS.

Go then: and I will meet him ere he come.

Scene 3.

PORUS, TAXILES.

TAXILES.

What! so impatient! Will you then—

PORUS.

Not so,

With your alliance will I meddle not.
Hephæstion, bitter only against me,
Of your submission will inform his king.
The troops of Axiana, bound to me,
Await the conflict, ranged beneath my flag,
The honour of her throne will I support,
As of my own, and you shall judge the fray.
Let not your heart however, in its zeal
For your new friends, kindle fresh flames of strife.

Scene 4.

AXIANA, PORUS, TAXILES.

AXIANA (*to TAXILES*).

Alas, what is this they say of you? Our foes
Make it their boast that Taxiles submits,
At least at heart, nor marches 'gainst a king
Whom he respects.. •

TAXILES.

The word of enemies
Is hardly to be trusted; time will teach
A better knowledge.

AXIANA.

Sir, then give the lie
To this insulting rumour, and confound
Those who have uttered it. Like Porus go,
Force them to silence; let them feel your wrath,
And learn they have no deadlier foe than you.

TAXILES.

Madam, I go my army to array.
Heed less these rumours that alarm you so:
Porus performs his duty; so will I.

Scene 5.

AXIANA, PORUS.

AXIANA.

That cold and sullen brow gives me no clue,
His craven bearing looks not that of king
Marching to victory, whom I can trust.
We may not longer doubt we are betray'd:
He to his sister sacrifices name
And country. In his hatred he desires

Our downfall, and but waits the battle hour
To show it.

PORUS.

Losing him, I lose a prop
Unstable ; I have known him far too well
To count on his support. These eyes have seen
His doubts, unmoved, dreading his feeble arm
Much more if raised for us. A traitor fled,
To please his sister, weakens us much less
Than cowardly resistance.

AXIAN.

Be not rash ;
Your valour reckons not th' invading hosts
Almost alone, hast'ning to meet his strokes
You but oppose yourself to countless foes.

PORUS.

What ! would you have me prove a traitor too,
And, out of terror, give you up for slaves ?
That I should stay within my camp confined,
And, after giving challenge, shirk the fight ?
Nay, Madam, I believe it not, but know
Too well that soul where glory's fire burns high.
Can I forget whose were the potent charms
That roused our princes all, and drew them on
To battle ? Whose high spirit scorn'd to yield,
And none but Alexander's conqueror
Would love ? That task be mine, whereto I haste
Less to avoid his chains than merit yours.
Madam, I go, ambitious to deserve
Bondage so sweet, to conquer or to die ;
And, since my sighs appeal without avail
To one whose heart glory alone can sway,
I will go forth to win a victory
That shall attach such honour to my name,
As may from love of valour lead your heart,
Perchance, to love the victor.

AXIANA.

• Go, my lord.

It may be in the camp of Taxiles
These will be found men braver than himself ;
To rouse them I will make a last essay,
Thereafter share your fortune in your camp.
Seek not to know the secrets of my heart ,
Live, and enjoy a triumph.

PORUS.

 This delay
Is needless, Madam. Why not tell me now
If my entreaties move you ? Can your heart
Suffer a hapless prince, whose cruel fate
Perhaps condemns him ne'er to see again
The idol of his soul, to die without
The proud assurance of a destiny
So great ?

AXIANA.

What can I say ?

PORUS.

 Queen of my soul,
If any tenderness you felt for me,
That heart, which gives me promise of renown
To be this day achieved, might promise more,
A little love. Can it defend itself
Against such sighs ? Can it—

AXIANA.

 March forth to meet
Th' invader. Victory is yours, if he
Resist no better than this heart of mine.

ACT III.

Scene 1.

AXIANA, CLEOPHILA.

AXIANA.

How is this, Madam? Am I prisoner here?
Forbidden to behold my army march
To battle? Is 't with me that Taxiles
Begins his treason thus, in his own camp
Holding me captive? This then is the fruit
Of all his sighs! My humble worshipper
Become my master; and, already tired
Of my disdain, despairing of the heart
He binds the limbs!

CLEOPHILA.

Nay, but you construe ill
The just alarm of one who ne'er succumb'd
Save to your charms. View with a kinder eye
The zeal which makes your safety its concern.
While round us now two mighty armies, stirr'd
With equal ardour for the bloody fray,
Make everywhere the sparks of fury fly,
In what direction would you guide your steps?
Where could you find a shelter from the storm
But here, where all is calm and life is safe?
Like tranquil port—

AXIANA.

'Tis that tranquillity
With its degrading safety I resent.
What! When my subjects, fighting for their queen,
And led by Porus, fall upon the plain,
Sealing their faithful service with their blood,
When I can almost hear their dying cries,
They prate to me of peace, and in his camp
Your brother keeps a posture of repose

Amid the tumult, and insults my grief,
Directing my sad eyes to sights of joy!

CLEOPHILA.

Would you then, Madam, that my brother's love
Should leave in danger's jaws a life so dear?
He knows too well the hazard—

AXIANA.

And to turn
My steps therefrom, this generous lover makes
His camp my prison; whilst his rival risks
Life for my sake, his valour is content
To act the gaoler!

CLEOPHILA.

Happy Porus! How
The shortest absence from him tries you sore
With such impatience that you needs must search
The field of battle to discover him!

AXIANA.

I would do more; yea, even to the tomb
Would follow him with ardour and with pride,
Lose all my realms, and see with eyes unmoved
The victor pay therewith Cleophila
For entrance to her heart!

CLEOPHILA.

You need not go,
If you seek Porus. Soon will he be brought
Hither a captive. Let us guard for him
So fair a conquest that his love has made.

AXIANA.

Already does your heart in triumph fly
To Alexander, and his victory hail.
But, trusting to the flattering hopes of love,
Your boasts may prove a little premature;
You press your eager wishes somewhat far,

And count too soon upon your heart's desire :

Yes—

CLEOPHILA.

Now my brother comes, and we shall learn
Whose the mistake has been.

AXIANA.

No room for doubt
Longer remains ; that brow so satisfied
Has the defeat of Porus written there. .

Scene 2.

TAXILES, AXIANA, CLEOPHILA.

TAXILES.

Madam, had Porus been less cholerick,
And follow'd the good counsel of a friend,
He might indeed have spared my present pain
In coming to announce his fate myself.

AXIANA.

Is Porus—

TAXILES.

All is over : and deceived
By valour, he is taken in the toils
Of which I warn'd him ! 'Twas not that his arm,
(For to a fallen rival I'll be just,)
Fail'd to dispute the victory right well,
Making his foes pay dearly with their blood :
Glory, attracted by his brilliant feats,
'Tween him and Alexander for a while
Waver'd. But, in his anger against me,
At last he charg'd too hotly, and I saw
His troops disorder'd, broken, turn'd to flight,
Your soldiers routed, and his own dispersed ;
Saw finally himself carried along
With them, in their endeavours to escape ;

Too late of vain resentment disabused,
He long'd for succour he refused before.

AXIANA.

Refused! What then? Your patriotic pride
Waits till entreaties rouse its energies!
Against your will you must be forced to fight,
Else will you stir not e'en to save your realms!
But to return to Porus—did he not
Speak by example with commanding voice?
Could not his risk put courage in your heart,
The danger of your mistress, and the State
Ready to perish? Go, you serve full well
The master giv'n you by your sister! Do.
Whate'er her spite dictates! Treat all alike,
And let your mistress share your rival's chains!
So well you've work'd, your crime and his defeat
Have placed that noble hero in my heart,
To be adored. Ere this day ends, I wish
To make my love and hatred manifest,
Before your face to pledge myself to him,
And in his presence swear immortal hate
For you. Farewell, and love me if you will,
Now that you know me.

TAXILES.

Think not that my vows
Are faithless. Look for neither threats nor chains;
Better does Alexander know what's due
To queens. Allow his kindness a free scope,
And keep a throne Porus should ne'er have placed
In peril. At all hazards I myself
Would wage fierce battle with the hand that touch'd
Object so sacred.

AXIANA.

What! my sceptre then,
Giv'n by a foe, must be upheld by you?
Shall the same tyrant set me on my throne,
Who came to drive me from it?

TAXILES.

Kings and queens,
When fallen low before his conquering sword,
Have let his generous kindness soothe their woes.
The wife and mother of Darius see,
How like a brother does he treat the one,
Like son the other!

AXIANA.

Nay, I cannot sell
My friendship, flatter tyrants, owe my crown
To pity. Persia's women are too weak
For me to copy. Think you I will haunt
My victor's court, follow him thro' the world,
And boast how light the chains he makes me wear?
If he gives crowns, let him give ours to you,
And deck you, if he will, with borrow'd plumes;
Nor Porus, nor myself, will grudge you these,
And you will be a slave much more than we.
I hope that Alexander's pride, ere long,
Vex'd that your crime should stain his victory,
Will by your execution clear himself.
Knaves such as you oft play the traitor twice.
Let not his present favours dazzle you;
Look you how Bessus suffer'd, faithless found.
Farewell.

Scene 3.

CLEOPHILA, TAXILES.

CLEOPHILA.

You may indulge her in this fury:
Time and the Conqueror's pleasure will conspire
For your success. Her rage, say what she may,
Will not for long refuse to mount a throne.
The master of her fortunes, you will be
Lord of her heart. But tell me, have you seen
The Victor? For what treatment may we look
From him? What said he?

TAXILES.

Sister, I have seen
Your Alexander. Such a youthful grace
Met my first glance, as seem'd to falsify
The number of his feats; my thoughts, I own,
Dare'd not connect such great renown with one
So young; but on that brow heroic pride
Was stamp'd; his fiery eye and noble port
Told me 'twas Alexander, for his face
Infallibly proclaims how great his soul;
And, with a presence that supports his claims,
His eye is no less potent to command
Than is his arm. His glory dazzled me,
Fresh from the field; and in his smile I read
Success. On seeing me, his pride forgot,
He made his goodness evident instead.
The triumph of the victor could not hide
The lover's tenderness. "Return," he said,
"Prepare your sister's lovely eyes to see
A conqueror who lays his victory
And heart before her feet."

He follows close.

No more. I leave you mistress of your fate,
To you entrust the conduct of my own.

CLEOPHILA.

If I have pow'r, you shall keep yours intact.
All shall obey you, if the Conqueror's ear
Be mine.

TAXILES.

I go then. See, he comes himself.

Scene 4.

ALEXANDER, TAXILES, CLEOPHILA, HEPHÆSTION.

ALEXANDER. .

Go, my Hephæstion. Porus must be found;
Take him alive, and spare the vanquish'd all.

Scene 5.

ALEXANDER, TAXILES, CLEOPHILA.

ALEXANDER (*to TAXILES*).

Is it then true, Sir, a misguided queen
Prefers the valour of a headstrong king
To you? But fear him not, his realms are yours;
You have a prize to offer that may sway
Her passion. Sovereign of two kingdoms, hers
Is in your hands. Go, with your vows present
Three crowns.

TAXILES.

You are too generous. 'Tis too much

ALEXANDER.

At leisure you may thank me for my care.
Go where Love calls you now; nay, linger not;
And let the palm of victory crown your flame.

Scene 6.

ALEXANDER, CLEOPHILA.

ALEXANDER.

Madam, his love shall have my firm support.
May I have nought, who can do all for him?
So lavish of the fruits of victory
Tow'rd him, shall I have nothing for myself,
But barren fame? Sceptres restored or giv'n
Into your hands, friends crown'd with mine own bays,
The honours I have won rain'd on their heads,
All show to other conquests I aspire.
Did I not promise you my strong right arm
Should soon to your sweet presence bring me nigh?
Forget not, Madam, that you promised then
To me a place within your heart. I come.

SCENE 6.]

ALEXANDER THE GREAT.

The pow'r of Love has fought on my behalf,
And Victory has herself redeem'd my word.
When all around you see subdued, 'tis time
To yield yourself. Say, would your heart withdraw
The pledge it gave? Can it alone escape
The Conqueror of to-day, who seeks but that?

CLEOPHILA. -

My heart is not so stern as to remain
Invincible, when all else owns your will.
I pay due honour to the glorious strength
That holds a hundred nations at your feet.
To conquer India was your easiest task;
The firmest courage you inspire with dread.
And, when you will, your kindness in its turn
Will touch with gratitude the hardest hearts.
But ah, my lord, that valour and that grace
Oft wake within me trouble and alarm;
I fear lest you, contented to have gain'd
My heart, should leave it in distress to pine,
That, heedless of the passion you aroused,
Your soul should scorn conquest so lightly won.
Love lasts not long with heroes like yourself,
But glory ever has transporting charms;
And, 'mid your amorous sighs, it well may be
To conquer still is all that you desire.

ALEXANDER.

How little can you know the ardent love
That wings those sighs with which I turn to you
At other times, I own, amidst my troops,
My heart has panted only for renown;
Peoples and kings, subdued beneath my sway,
Alone seem'd worthy objects of concern.
Persia's fair dames, presented to my sight,
No better than her kings could vanquish me;
My heart, arm'd with disdain against their sh
Refused to render homage to their charms;
Invincible, 'twas glory it adored;

To Love insensible, it deem'd its loss
Felicity, till your dear tyrant eyes
Inflicted a new wound within my heart.
The pride of victory is its aim no more,
But glad it is to boast its own defeat ;
Blest if your eyes, melting in tenderness,
Own in their turn the conquest they have won !
Why will you always doubt their victory,
Always reproach me with my warrior bays,*
As tho' the pleasing fetters you impose
Were form'd to bind none but ignoble souls ?
On strange new exploits I am bent, to show
The pow'r of Love on Alexander's heart.
This arm of mine, pledged to your service now,
Has to maintain your honour with my own ;
The trump of Fame shall tell in martial notes
Of nations to our world as yet unknown,
And there to you shall altars rise, where none
Are raised by savage hands to gods themselves.

CLEOPHILA.

Yes, thither Victory will follow you,
Your captive, but I have my doubts if Love
Will do the same. So many seas between
May wash my image from your memory.
When Ocean bears you on his stormy waves,
The whole world vanquish'd,—when that day arrives,
When you shall see all monarchs at your knees
Lie prostrate, and Earth, trembling, hold her peace
Before you, will you think how a young Queen
Unceasingly regrets you, in the heart
Of her far distant realms, and calls to mind
How sweetly you assured her of your love ?

ALEXANDER.

What! Think you then that, cruel to myself
I can abandon here so rare a prize
Of beauty? Or will you yourself refuse
The throne of Asia that I offer you ?

CLEOPHILA.

My lord, you know that on my brother's will
My own depends.

ALEXANDER.

Ah! if my happiness
Is in his hands, all India, to his nod
Submissive, soon for me shall intercede.

CLEOPHILA.

My love for him is free from selfish taint.
Soothe, I implore you, an offended Queen;
Nor let a rival who this day has braved
Your anger, prove more fortunate than he.

ALEXANDER.

A noble rival Porus was, indeed;
Never such valour won my high regard.
I saw him where the battle raged; we met;
Nor shunn'd he that encounter; each one sought
The other. And so fierce a rivalry
Our quarrel would have soon decided, when
Some troops that came between us made our strokes
Fall indiscriminate amongst the throng.

Scene 7.

ALEXANDER, CLEOPHILA, HEPHÆSTION.

ALEXANDER.

Well, have they brought that rash, misguided Prince?

HEPHÆSTION.

All places have been search'd, but all as yet
In vain, look as they may; his flight or death
Conceals the captive monarch from their eyes.
But in their flight a remnant of his troops,
Surrounded, stay'd further pursuit awhile,
And seem disposed to sell their lives full dear.

ALEXANDER.

Disarm but do not drive them to despair.
 Our task must be to bend this stubborn Queen,
 And thereby, Madam, for my passion win
 Your brother's favour, and since on his peace
 My own depends, let us make that secure.

ACT IV.

Scene I.

AXIANA.

Am I to hear these shouts of victory
 For ever ringing glory to my foes,
 Reproach to me? And may I not, at least,
 Hold solitary converse with my woes?
 Incessantly pursued by one I hate,
 I care not for my life, try what they may
 To make me love it; while close watch they keep.
 But, Porus, ne'er believe I can be stopp'd
 From following thee. Doubtless thy heart refused
 T' outlive thy star: vain all their arm'd pursuit,
 Thine efforts would thy presence have betray'd,
 So they must look for thee amongst the dead.
 Alas, when thou didst leave me, and thy love
 Flooded thine heart, these ills that crush me now
 Seem'd then foreseen; when into mine thine eyes
 Gazed fondly, and besought to know thy place
 Within my heart. Of failure on the field
 Thou didst not reck; 'twas love that caused thy fear.
 Why did I hide with many a subterfuge
 A secret which to know not vex'd thy peace?
 How oft thine eyes, making resistance weak,
 Almost compelled my silence to give way!
 How oft, responsive to thy strong desire
 E'en in thy presence heartfelt sighs escaped!
 But still I sought to doubt thy victory;
 As Glory's incense to myself explain'd
 Those sighs; and fancied that nought else I loved.

Forgive! to-day I feel I loved but thee!
As many a time before, I own it now,
Glory possess'd my soul, but I refrain'd
From telling, as I ought, that it was thou
Didst fix my homage. Her I learn'd to know
Thro' seeing thee, and, ardent as I was,
Seen in another should have loved her less.
But, ah, what boots it to vent useless sighs
Thou canst no longer hear, lost in the void?
'Tis time my soul, descending to the tomb,
Should pledge the love for which thou long didst yearn
In vain, and, as a seal of faithfulness,
Show that this heart cannot survive its loss.
Canst thou suppose that I could wish to live
The Conqueror's captive, to whose will thy death
Delivers us? I know he means to come
To speak with me; and, giving back my throne,
Thinks to console me, thinks my hatred quell'd
May serve for trophy of his clemency.
Ay, let him come, and he shall see me die
A monarch to the last, worthy of thee!

Scene 2.

ALEXANDER, AXIANA.

AXIANA.

Well, Sire! and do you find some secret joy
In seeing tears your arms have forced to flow?
Or is it that you grudge me, in my fall,
Freedom to weep, alone with misery?

ALEXANDER.

Your grief shall be as free as it is just:
Madam, you mourn a Prince magnanimous.
I was his foe, but need not therefore blame
The tears devoted to the hero's death.
Ere to her borders India saw me come,
His brilliant virtues made him known to me,

Conspicuous among Earth's greatest kings ;
I knew—

AXIANA.

Why came you then with fierce attack .
What led you from the world's remotest bounds
In search of virtue to make war thereon ?
Can signal merit burst upon your sight,
And only move your pride to persecute ?

ALEXANDER.

Yes, I sought Porus ; but, whate'er be said,
I did not seek in order to destroy.
I own that, burning with ambitious fire,
I was attracted hither by his fame,
And but to hear he was invincible
Made my heart eager for fresh enterprise.
Whilst I was dreaming that on me alone,
For many a gallant fight, all eyes were set,
I saw the valour of this warrior spread,
Till Fame between us held her balance poised.
When from his arm increasing terrors flew,
India to me seem'd to present a field
Deserving my best efforts, for I tired
Of kings too feeble to resist, and heard
With joy of such a brave and gallant foe
To whet my courage. So I came to seek
Glory and danger. Far did he surpass
All I had heard, and Victory, before
So constant, almost left my side to join
Your ranks. The least success was hardly won ;
And Porus, when he lost a battle, saw
His glory grow yet greater in defeat,
A fall so noble but exalts his fame,
Not to have fought would vex his spirit more.

AXIANA.

Alas ! that he, in patriotic zeal,
Felt bound to cast away all care for life ;
For, harass'd and betray'd on every side,
Headlong he charged a multitude of foes.

But were it true his warlike ardour fired
Your soul, and show'd an open path to fame,
Why with unworthy weapons did you fight?
Were you obliged with cunning to oppose
Courage; to wait upon another's will
For his defeat, and mar your fair renown?
Triumph; but be assured that in his heart
Already Taxiles disputes with you.
The conqueror's glorious name, and with some show
Of justice; but for him, the traitor boasts,
You would have won no bays. This soothes my smart;
To see your glory shared by such as he.

ALEXANDER.

Your passion vainly strives to smirch my fame,
I ne'er was known to steal a victory;
And none can say that I subdue my foes
Not with the sword, but guile and stratagem,
The coward's arts. Outnumber'd everywhere,
Yet never have I deign'd to hide myself,
Or owe my triumph to an ambuscade;
But in the light of day I fight and win.

With genuine grief I mourn your country's fate;
I would have spared your princes a defeat.
Had they but follow'd my advice and wish,
I would have saved them, or have fought them both.
Believe me.

AXIANA.

Yes, you are invincible:
Is't not enough that all is in your pow'r?
Why must you cast so many kings in chains?
Make with impunity the whole world groan?
What had so many captured cities done?
Why is Hydaspes cumber'd with our dead?
What have I done to cause the overthrow
Of him who could alone attract my eye?
Did he invade your borders, deluge Greece
With blood? What nations have been roused by us
To rage and opposition against you?
Your glory we admired, we grudged it not.

Charm'd with each other, with our thrones content,
 We look'd to find a happier lot than yours :
 The only conquest Porus wish'd to win
 Was o'er a heart that might have own'd him lord
 This day. Were his the only blood you shed,
 That crime your only title to reproach,
 Would it not mar your happiness to feel
 You came so far to snap so fair a tie
 Between our hearts? Nay, flatter not your soul,
 You are a tyrant, nothing else.

ALEXANDER.

"I see

Your purpose, Madam ; to provoke my wrath
 To rise against you with outrageous taunts.
 You hope, perchance, my kindness, tried too far,
 May violate its former character.
 But, if your virtue could exert no spell,
 The conqueror is disarm'd to your attack ;
 Compassion moves me, e'en against your will,
 And I respect you in your deep distress.
 It is this trouble that distorts your sight,
 So that a hateful tyrant I appear :
 Else would you own, the glory of my arms
 Has not been always stain'd with blood and tears,
 And you would see—

ANTIOCH.

Can I help seeing them,
 Those virtues which embitter my despair ?
 Have I not seen your triumphs everywhere
 Free from the insolence that stings the brave ?
 Scythians and Persians see I not well pleased
 To bear your yoke, and vaunt your clemency,
 Eager to guard your person, and supplant
 Your people in a charge so coveted ?
 But what does it avail the heart you wound
 Everywhere else to hear your goodness praised ?
 Can you expect my hatred to be soothed,
 Because the hand that tortures me is kiss'd
 By others ? Can the kings that you have help

Nations content to serve you, give me back
Porus? 'No, Sire; my hatred is increased
By others' love, e'en tho' myself compell'd
To admiration; Earth's united voice
Shall not dictate to me, tho' none be found
To share my hatred.

ALEXANDER.

I excuse the wrath
That springs from love, yet well may be surprised.
If common rumour has reported right,
Porus no special favour won from you.
Wavering in choice 'tween Taxiles and him;
Whilst he yet lived, your heart refused to speak,
But, when he can no longer hear your voice,
Now, for the first time, you declare for him!
Think you that, conscious of your new-born flame,
E'en in the tomb he claims it for himself?
Load not yourself with unavailing grief,
Cares more important summon you elsewhere.
Sufficient tribute to his memory
Your tears have paid. Reign, with fresh lustre shine,
And, to your stricken heart restoring peace,
Strengthen your realms, sore shaken by his fall;
Choose them a master from so many kings:
Deeper in love than ever, Taxiles—

AXIANA.

The traitor!

ALEXANDER.

Prithee take a milder tone;
He bears no stain of treason against you,
Lord of his own dominions, he resolved
To shield them from the thunderbolt of war;
No oath, no duty bound him to leap down
Into the gulf where Porus chose to plunge.
Think, it is Alexander, he himself,
That cares t' advance your lover's happiness;
Think how, united by so just a choice,
Indus shall with Hydaspes own your sway.
All shall be easy, when your interests

Are my concern and closely joined with those
Of Taxiles.

He comes. I do not wish
My presence to embarrass him. His voice
Will best explain what, utter'd by my lips,
Seems to offend. Lovers like solitude :

Scene 3.

AXIANA, TAXILES.

AXIANA.

Mighty King, draw near,
Great Monarch of the Indus; you have had
Your praise sung here, and I have been rebuked
For anger against one who, it is said,
Would please me if he could, whose love is warm'd
By my cold treatment; I am urged forsooth
To love you in return. Know you the task
Which I would set you,—how to touch my heart?
And are you ready—

TAXILES.

Madam, only prove
What pow'r so sweet a hope has o'er my heart.
What must I do?

AXIANA.

He who would win my love
Must be in love with glory, as am I,
Interpret vows into fine feats of arms,
And hate, as I do, Alexander's name;
Into the midst of terrors he must march
Fearless; must fight and conquer, or be slain.
Compare yourself with Porus, and decide
Which of the two is worthier of me.
Yes, Sir, my heart, that seem'd to be in doubt,
Knew well the difference between a King
And a base slave. I loved him, and I love.

Since jealous Fate forbids him to enjoy
The sweet confession, I have chosen you
As witness. Ever shall my tears revive
His memory, and you shall see me place
My only pleasure left in telling you
Of him.

TAXILES.

In vain my ardour seeks to warm
A soul as cold as ice. Porus has set
His deathless image there. Should I confront
Grim Death to please you, I should please you not,
Unless I perish'd, nor can—

AXIANA.

My esteem
May be regain'd; wash out in foemen's blood
Your crime. Lo! Fortune smiles; the hero's Shade
Gathers his scatter'd troops beneath his flag,
And seems the only pow'r that can arrest
Their flight; yours too, ashamed of your commands,
Wear on their brows wrath and repentance writ
For all to read. Add fuel to the fire
Which now consumes them; and to us restore
Our Freedom, that begins to breathe again;
Be the defender of your throne and mine,
And let not Porus wait to find an heir.
You answer nothing. By your face I see
You lack the courage for so grand a scheme;
Th' example of a hero calls in vain;
You hug your chains. Leave me, and live a slave!

TAXILES.

This is too much! Madam, do you forget
That, if you force me to it, I may use
The Master's tone, provoked by your contempt
Beyond endurance. All you have is mine,
And, since my homage but inflames your pride,
I shall be able—

AXIANA.

Yes, I know it well.

I am your prisoner, and you fain would make
My wishes captive too, till to your sighs
My heart responds. Good! Cast away that mask
Of irksome mildness, terrors be your aid,
Speak with the tyrant's tongue, ready to sting,
Try all you can, I cannot hate you more:
Deal not, I pray you, in mere idle threats.

Your sister comes, to prompt you in your part.
Farewell. Her counsels and my wishes tend
To the same goal, and you will help me soon
To follow Porus.

TAXILES.

Nay, but rather—

Scene 4.

TAXILES, CLEOPHILA.

CLEOPHILA.

Leave

This thankless Queen, sworn to disturb our peace
With deathless hate, who makes of your despair
Her sole delight. Forget—

TAXILES.

No, in my heart
Her image is enshrined; I worship her.
Tho' all my sighs meet ceaseless enmity,
In spite of your persuasion, her disdain,
Against my will, her must I ever love.
Nor need her wrath surprise us; you and I
Have giv'n her cause enough. Ah! but for you,
And your ill counsel which has been my curse,
I should be now, if loved not, less abhorr'd;
Ay, but for you, defended by my care,
My love with that of Porus she might weigh

In doubt ; and would not that be happiness,
To make her for a moment hesitate ?
I can no longer live beneath her scorn ;
I must fall humbly at her cruel feet,
Or run with speed to execute her wrath,
Tho' aim'd at Alexander or at you.
I know the ardour of your mutual flame,
But 'tis too much to sacrifice my peace
For yours, forget myself to give you joy ;
Nay, all must perish, may I but be blest.

CLEOPHILA.

Go then, and to the battle-field return ;
Let not the flame die down that fires you now ;
Why lingers this inconstant courage here ?
Haste to the conflict : Porus waits for you.

TAXILES.

Is Porus living ? Has he then appear'd ?

CLEOPHILA.

Yes, his tremendous strokes too well attest
'Tis he. What happen'd he foresaw : his death
Being noised abroad held back the Conqueror's arm,
Too credulous. He hither comes to wake
Their slumbering valour, triumph premature
To check, and, doubt it not, with love and rage
Inflamed, to seize his mistress, or be slain
Before her eyes. Nay more, seduced by her,
Your camp breaks out in murmurs, well prepared
To follow Porus. Go, like a generous swain,
Succour your rival loved so tenderly !
Farewell.

Scene 5.

TAXILES.

Ha ! Bent upon my ruin, Fate
Calls back my dangerous rival from the grave.
Again shall he behold those eyes whose tears

Mourn'd him, and dead preferr'd him yet to me.
'Tis more than I can bear ! Let me but see
What Fortune offers, and with whom shall rest
The glorious prize ; nor will I idly watch
The issue from afar, in feeble wrath.

ACT V.

Scene 1.

ALEXANDER, CLEOPHILA.

ALEXANDER.

What ! Fear'd you Porus after his defeat,
My victory imperfect in your eyes ?
No, no ; my captive could not me escape.
Trapp'd by my orders, taken in the toils,
Dread him no longer ; rather pity him.

CLEOPHILA.

I fear him most, when most he pity claims.
Brave as he was, the fame he won in war
Troubled my mind far less than does his fall.
While at his back a mighty army march'd,
Their exploits and his own alarm'd me not,
But now, unfortunate, a King discrown'd,
Henceforth he will be ranged among your friends.

ALEXANDER.

No right has Porus now to such a place ;
For Alexander's hatred he has sought
Too far. He knows how loath I was to strike,
But when I did, 'twas with as fierce a hate
As he could wish. A warning shall he be
To all the world. On him must I avenge
The ills that war has wrought, to prevent which
Was in his pow'r. 'Tis his own act that brings

Its punishment. Twice conquer'd, and by you
Hated—

CLEOPHILA.

I cannot say I hate him, Sire ;
And were I free to hearken to the voice
Of his misfortunes that appeal to me,
I'd tell you he was greatest of our princes ;
His arm was long the stay of all our States ;
He wish'd, perhaps, in marching against you,
To show at least that he deserved to fall
Under no stroke but yours, that the same field
Might bring renown to both, and link his name
With Alexander's. But such warm defence
Would wound my brother, and destroy his hopes.
So long as Porus lives, what can *he* be ?
Ruin must needs be his, and mine as well
It may be ; for his love, obtaining nought,
Will hold me guilty, fit for punishment.
E'en now your heart is fluttering for new flights
Of conquest thro' the world. When I shall see
The Ganges roll his flood 'tween you and him,
Who will restrain my brother's unjust wrath ?
My lonely soul will languish, far from you.
Alas ! Should he condemn my sighs to cease,
What would become of this poor heart of mine,
The Conqueror to whom I gave it gone ?

• ALEXANDER.

Madam, enough ; if you have giv'n your heart,
'Tis mine, command your brother as he will,
To guard more safely than those vanquish'd lands
Which I have kept only to offer you.
One conquest more ; then, dearest, I return,
Thenceforth my sole ambition to be king
Over your soul, and yet myself obey,
Placing within your hands my destiny,
And all mankind's. Ready to bear my yoke,
The Mallian awaits me, at the verge
Of ocean, where I need but show myself

As conqueror of the world and of your heart,
When the proud element—

CLEOPHILA.

What! War on war?
Seek you for subjects e'en beyond the Earth?
And lands to their inhabitants unknown,
Must they bear witness to your brilliant deeds?
What foes do you expect 'neath skies so rude?
They will oppose you with their desert wastes,
Sunless and solitary, where Nature's self
Seems to expire. And there, perchance, may Fate
In ambush lie to seize you, venting thus
The secret envy that has tried in vain
To cloud your grand career, resolved at least
That dumb Forgetfulness shall dig your grave.
Must you drag, then, the remnants of a host
That twenty times has perish'd, twenty times
Has been renew'd? A hundred battle-fields
Have swallow'd half the troops you lately led;
Those that survive claim pity, and their groans—

ALEXANDER.

I have but to prepare them for their march,
And they will follow me with hearts revived,
Howe'er they murmur in an idle camp,
And count their wounds; soon they will blame them
selves,
And beg me to expose them to fresh blows.
Let me meanwhile support your brother's suit:
His rival can no longer cross his love.
Have I not spoken? And again I say—

CLEOPHILA.

Here comes the Queen, my lord.

Scene 2.

ALEXANDER, AXIANA, CLEOPHILA.

ALEXANDER.

Well; Potus lives.

Madam, it seems that Heav'n has heard your prayers,
And giv'n him back to you.

AXIANA.

Nay, rather say,
Takes him for ever from me. Nor can hope
Allay my present pain. His death before
Was doubtful, now 'tis sure. He dares the worst,
To see me once again, or give me help,
Helpless himself, alone against a host.
In vain his gallant efforts caused alarm
At first; in vain a few brave warriors, nerved
By his bold courage, scared the victor's camp.
He must succumb, and valiant to the last,
Fall on the heaps of slain that bar his way.
Oh, could I only, making my escape,
Show myself there, and die before his eyes!
But Taxiles, the traitor, holds me fast,
And goes himself meanwhile to feast his eyes
Upon his rival's blood, and see him lie
Low in the arms of Death, if so he dare
To meet him.

ALEXANDER.

Madam, by my care his life
Is saved; and soon shall his return content
Your heart's desire. You shall see him.

AXIANA.

What!

Can your care reach to him, and shall the arm
That crush'd him be his stay, the conqueror's hand
Give safety? Yet, what wonder is too great,

Issuing from such a source? I call to mind
How that you said you hold the vanquish'd foe
A foe no longer, and that Porus was
Never your foe at all; that glory arm'd
Yourself and him alike, him prompt to try
His courage against yours, you to attack
But not destroy.

ALEXANDER.

The scorn that braved my wrath
Doubtless deserves a conqueror more severe;
His pride in falling seems to gather strength,
But I have ceased to be his enemy,
And cast off hatred when I drop that name.
Of his reward shall Taxiles be judge,
To ruin or to spare, as seems him best.
In short it is to him you must appeal.

AXIANA.

What! go and beg for mercy at *his* feet!
Sent to make proof how kind is Taxiles!
If Porus must solicit such support,
Surely your hatred has decreed his death:
'Twas his destruction after all you sought.
How easily a generous soul is duped!
Too credulous and ready to forget,
Virtues in you I praised which were not yours.
Arm yourself then, my lord, with cruelty,
As a mere butcher end your grand career!
And, having raised so many fallen foes,
Destroy the one whom most you sought to spare.

ALEXANDER.

Strange love for Porus yours, that will not stoop
To save his life, but scorns my proffer'd boon,
And brands me as a jealous hypocrite!
Well, if he dies, accuse yourself alone.
I see him coming, and shall learn his will;
His judgment Porus shall himself pronounce.

Scene 3.

PORUS, ALEXANDER, AXIANA, CLEOPHILA, HEPHÆSTION,
ALEXANDER'S GUARDS.

ALEXANDER.

Well, Porus, so your pride has borne its fruit !
Where is the fair success that lured you on ?
Your soaring spirit is at last cast down.
Offended majesty a victim claims :
Nothing can save you.

Yet will I once more
Offer a pardon many times refused.
This queen rebels against my clemency,
Thinks constancy more precious than your life ;
Would have you die without a moment's doubt,
So long as to the tomb you bear the name
Of her true lover. Pay not such a price
For boast so vain. Live, and let Taxiles
Be happy.

PORUS.

Taxiles !

ALEXANDER.

Yes.

PORUS.

I approve
Your care so well bestow'd. What he has done
For you deserves no less. 'Twas he that snatch'd
Victory from me, gave you his sister, sold
His honour, me betray'd. What can you do
One service out of all to recompense ?
But I already have forestall'd your care ;
Go, see him die upon the battle field.

ALEXANDER.

Taxiles !

CLEOPHILA.

What is this?

HEPHESTION.

Yes, Sire, he's dead,
 Having himself tempted the stroke of Fate.
 Porus, tho' vanquish'd, still surrender scorn'd,
 And seem'd attacker rather than attack'd.
 His soldiers, fallen, wounded to the death,
 Shelter'd him with their bodies where they lay;
 And there, as if within a fort enclosed,
 'Gainst our whole host he bravely stood at bay,
 And with an arm that fear and slaughter dealt,
 Our boldest warriors foiling, held his post.
 I meant to spare him; his fast failing strength
 Would soon have placed his life within my pow'r,
 When to the fatal field rush'd Taxiles:
 "Let be," he cried, "I claim this captive mine.
 Porus, your hour is come, and death is sure,
 Perish, or yield the Queen to me."

He spoke,
 And Porus, at that voice rekindling rage,
 Lifted an arm wearied with many a blow,
 While with his eye he sought him, proud and calm:
 "Is that the faithless Taxiles I hear,
 That traitor to his country," he exclaim'd,
 "Th' his mistress, and to me? Come, coward, come!
 Yes, Axiana's yours, my prize I yield,—
 But your stout arm must take my life as well!
 Approach!"

Thereat th' infuriate rivals rush'd
 To deadly conflict. We, as best we could,
 To their encounter all our force opposed.
 But Porus carves a passage thro' our ranks,
 Meets Taxiles, and with a single thrust
 Pierces his heart; then, satisfied, his sword
 Surrenders.

CLEOPHILA.

For my brother I must weep;
 On me, my lord, your arms with all their weight

Have fallen. Vainly sought he your support;
Alas, your glory has but wrought his death.
Can Alexander's friendship help him now?
But will you see him to the grave descend
All unavenged, while his assassin boasts
Before his sister's eyes and yours, my lord?

AXIANA.

Let Alexander to her tears attend.
She has my sympathy, for with good cause
She mourns a brother, whom she strove in vain
To save, by making him a coward first.
It was not Porus who attack'd, 'twas he,
The traitor, that confronted his just wrath.
Why in the battle's tumult did he mix?
Came he to snatch him from the conqueror's grasp?
Nay, but when all was lost to overwhelm
A king who from his victors won respect?
But why deprive you of a pretext, urged
So plausibly? Her brother has been slain
By Porus; 'tis enough; with generous blood
Appease his ghost, and so avenge yourself.
But I too share his crime. Yes, Porus, yes,
My heart is yours, as Alexander knows;
Your rival knew it to his cost; from you
Alone I kept it. The last joy I feel
Is to declare it to yourself.

PORUS.

'Tis time
That Alexander should be satisfied.
Fear Porus, who tho' vanquish'd yet could do
As you have heard, who, by your troops hemm'd in,
Revenge'd defeat, whose name can raise fresh foes,
And wake from sleep a hundred fetter'd kings;
Quench in my blood these dangerous sparks of war.
Then go, and safely conquer all the earth
That's left. But think not that a heart like mine
Can thank a conqueror, and forego its rights.
Speak, and, without expecting me to soil

My honour, let us see how you can use
Your victory.

ALEXANDER.

Is that proud spirit still
Unbroken, Porus? And will your last breath
Be spent in threat'ning words? Victory herself
Must fear such pride; your name is still worth more
Than armies; I must take security.
Tell me then how to treat you.

PORUS.

• Like a king.

ALEXANDER.

Well, like a king's then shall your treatment be;
I will not leave my victory incomplete;
'Tis your own wish, nor will you raise complaint.
Porus, reign on; I give you back your crown;
And, with my friendship, Axiana take;
To welcome bonds I thus condemn you both.
Live both, and reign; alone of many kings,
Far as the Ganges' banks your rule extend.

(to CLEOPHILA.)

Such treatment, Madam, may surprise you; but
'Tis thus that Alexander wreaks revenge.
I love you, and my heart, touch'd by your sighs,
With your displeasure would not weigh the lives
Of thousands. But a gallant warrior's death,
Disarm'd and captive, would yourself offend:
Porus would triumph in a bold contempt
For all my harshness, and to th' grave descend
Victorious. Let me end as I began,
And bring you generosity unstain'd
As my best gift. Let Porus take his crown
Restored by me; and you yourself shall reign
O'er all the world besides. Grace well the throne
With goodness as with beauty; make your sway
Noble as well as brilliant from the first;
And let a sister's anger be forgot.

. AXIANA.

Yes, Madam, reign ; and suffer me t' esteem
The greatness of the Hero who has giv'n
His heart to you. Love him, and see the world
Adore him ; prize so sweet a privilege.

PORUS.

Sire, until now, the dread of all mankind
Forced me t' admire the fortune of your arms :
But 'mid the widespread terror I could see
In you no virtues that surpass'd my own.
I bow submissive now, and own myself
Vanquish'd by one whose magnanimity
Equals his valour. Go, subdue the world
To your obedience ; it shall see me lend
Support to all your exploits ; I am yours,
And will do all I can to give to it
So great a master.

CLEOPHILA.

What can heart so sad
As mine say to my lord ? Shall I repine
Because to Porus Alexander deigns
Both life and sceptre to restore ? He knows
What best becomes his glory. Press me not
For furthur speech ; in silence let me weep.

. ALEXANDER.

Yes, Madam, I too mourn a faithful friend ;
And fervent sorrow finds relief in sighs ;
A splendid tomb shall tell a future age
Of my remembrance and of your regret.

ANDROMACHE.
A TRAGEDY.

INTRODUCTION TO ANDROMACHE.

IN this tragedy, which made its appearance in 1667, there is a more intricate plot than is usual in Racine's plays, and it offers a greater variety of character and motive. Love, jealousy, friendship, conjugal fidelity, maternal tenderness, anger, and despair are all portrayed with skilful touches; and if the language is that of the French Court of the seventeenth century, the natural emotions of the human heart, the same in all ages, show themselves plainly under the mask of conventional mannerism.

Racine has taken the subject of his drama from the third book of Virgil's "*Æneid*," ll. 291-322, and the "*Andromache*" of Euripides, but has modified the ancient tradition so far as to make Hector's son Astyanax the object of the heroine's solicitude, instead of Molossus, the fruit of her subsequent union with Pyrrhus.

CHARACTERS.

ANDROMACHE, *Widow of Hector, Captive of Pyrrhus.*

PYRRHUS, *Son of Achilles, King of Epirus.*

ORESTES, *Son of Agamemnon.*

HERMIONE, *Daughter of Helen, betrothed to Pyrrhus.*

PYLADES, *Friend of Orestes.*

CLEONE, *Friend of Hermione.*

CEPHISSA, *Friend of Andromache.*

PHENIX, *Tutor of Achilles, and afterwards of Pyrrhus.*

Attendants of ORESTES.

The scene is laid at Buthrotum, a town of Epirus, in a hall at
the Palace of Pyrrhus.

ANDROMACHE.

A TRAGEDY.

ACT I.

Scene 1.

ORESTES, PYLADES.

ORESTES.

Yes, since I find again a friend so true,
My fortune 'gins to wear another face ;
Already seems her wrath to have been soothed,
Permitting us to meet each other here.
Who would have thought that this detested coast
Would first present you to Orestes' eyes ;
And, lost six months and more, you should be found
Where in Epirus Pyrrhus holds his court ?

PYLADES.

Thanks be to Heav'n, that has detain'd my steps
So oft, and seem'd to shut me out from Greece,
Since that disastrous day when winds and waves
Scatter'd our vessels almost in the sight
Of this Epirus. How I mourn'd and wept,
Myself an exile, for Orestes' fate ;
Dreading for him ever some danger new,
Some sorrow that my friendship could not share !
That melancholy most of all I fear'd
Which I have seen so long your soul o'ercloud ;
I fear'd that Heav'n might grant you cruel aid,

And offer what you ever sought,—a tomb. .
But now I see you, and, if I may dare
To say it, happier fortune brings you here :
This stately train that on your steps attends
Looks not like that of wretch who seeks his death.

ORESTES.

Alas ! Who knows what fortune is my guide ?
Love bids me seek a cruel mistress here ;
But I am ignorant of Fate's decrees,
Whether 'tis life or death that I shall find.

PYLADES.

Is then your soul so bound in slavery,
That for Love's sake alone you care to live ?
What spell constrains you to those fires again,
The tortures you have suffer'd all forgot ?
Will she, who would not listen to your pray'rs
At Sparta, in Epirus prove more kind ?
Ashamed of having utter'd vows so vain,
You should despise her ; speak no more of her.
Your words deceived me.

ORESTES.

I deceived myself.

O'erwhelm not, friend, a wretch who clings to you :
Have I from you e'er hidden heart's desire ?
You knew my flame fresh born, my earliest sighs :
When Menelaus pledged his daughter's hand
To Pyrrhus, the avenger of his race,
You witness'd my despair ; since then you've seen
How I have dragg'd my chains from sea to sea.
I saw you, pitying my forlorn estate,
Ready to follow me where'er I went ;
Checking my madness in its wild career,
You saved me from myself from day to day.
But when, distracted by my fears, I thought
Hermione was lavishing her charms
On Pyrrhus, well you know how, fill'd with wrath,
I strove to make forgetfulness repay

Her scorn. I made you think, and thought myself,
The victory achieved; deem'd passion changed
To hatred, and, disparaging her charms,
Abhor'd her harshness, and defied her eyes
To raise the tender feelings I had crush'd.
In that deceitful calm I came to Greece,
And found her princes muster'd to withstand
A danger, and no mean one, that appear'd
Fraught with fresh troubles. Eagerly I join'd
Their ranks, and hoped in war to find release
From other cares, that, former strength regain'd,
My heart would lose all memory of love.
But mark with me how persecuting Fate
Entrapp'd me in the snare I thought to shun.
On every side I heard murmurs and threats
Raised against Pyrrhus from the whole of Greece,
Complaining that, forgetful of his blood
And promise, at his court he rears her foe,
Astyanax, the young ill-fated son
Of Hector, relic of so many kings
Buried 'neath Troy. To save the babe from death,
Andromache, as I have heard, deceived
Wily Ulysses, while another child,
Torn from her arms, was slaughter'd in his stead.
They say Hermione has fail'd to charm
My rival, that elsewhere his heart and crown
He offers. Menelaus, loath to trust
The rumour, is sore vex'd at long delay.
The cause of his displeasure is to me
A source of secret triumph, yet at first
I deem'd it but a feeling of revenge,
A thought that flatter'd pride. But soon I found
The fair tormentor had resumed her place
Within my heart; the smouldering fire revived,
I felt my hatred melt and disappear,
Or rather felt my love had never ceased.
Soliciting support from all the Greeks,
To Pyrrhus I was sent, and here I am.
My mission is to try if I can wrest
This infant from his arms, who, while he lives,
Brings fear to many. Happy shall I be,

If I can carry off, not Hector's son,
But my princess! Nor fancy that my flame,
Fann'd by repression, can extinguished be
By any peril. All resistance proved
To be in vain, I blindly yield myself
To Passion's sway; I love Hermione,
Am come to win her, fly with her, or die.
Pyrrhus you know; what think you will he do?
Tell me what passes in his court, and what
Within his heart. Still to Hermione.
Is he enslaved? Will he restore the prize
Of which he robb'd me?

PYLADES.

Should I promise that,
I should deceive you; not with his consent
Shall she be yours. Not that he seems much pleas'd
T' have won her; Hector's widow fires his heart
With warmer passion, but she proves unkind,
And hitherto has paid his love with hate,
Tho' daily he attempts in every way
To bind her stubborn will or rouse her fears.
From her he hides her boy, threatens his life,
Then fain would dry the tears he forced to flow.
Hermione has seen a hundred times
Her lover's wrath submit to sue again,
And offer humbly oft rejected vows,
With troubled sighs of mingled love and rage.
You must not then expect that I can tell
Th' emotions of a heart so ill controll'd.
In its distraction he may wed, perchance,
The one he scorns, and lose the one he loves.

ORESTES.

But tell me how Hermione beholds
Her charms contemn'd, the marriage rites delay'd.

PYLADES.

To all appearance she would seem, my lord,
Disdainful of her suitor's fickleness,

And thinks that anxious to be reconciled,
He'll soon entreat her to take back his heart.
To me indeed she has her grief reveal'd ;
She mourns in secret his indifference ;
Ready to leave him, still she always stays,
And sometimes calls Orestes to her aid.

ORESTES.

Ah, if I thought so, Pylades, full soon
Would I go, cast myself—

PYLADES.

Fulfil your task ;
Wait on the King, and tell him that all Greece
Is banded against Hector's son. So far
From giving up the child of her he loves,
Their hatred will but make his heart more fond ;
All efforts made to part them will the more
Unite them. Urge your mission, and its end
Must fail. He comes.

ORESTES.

Prepare her then to see
A lover who comes hither but for her.

. *Scene 2.*

PYRRHUS, ORESTES, PHENIX.

ORESTES. •

Ere by my voice all Greece addresses you,
Let me express my pleasure in her choice
Of me, and at beholding face to face
Achilles' offspring, conqueror of Troy.
Yes, we admire your exploits like his own ;
Before him Hector fell, Troy before you ;
Your daring and success alike have shown
Achilles' son alone can fill his place.

But what he never would have done, with pain
 We see you do, giving unhappy Troy
 Fresh pow'r to injure, letting pity move
 Your heart with fatal touch, prolonging feud
 Already waged so long. Do you forget
 The might of Hector? We remember still
 What blood he cost us; at his very name
 Widows and orphans tremble; not a home
 But calls for vengeance on this son of his,
 For father or for husband lost thro' him.
 Who knows what harm this child may one day work?
 Perchance he may come down upon our ports,
 As we have seen his sire do, burn our ships,
 And, fire in hand, pursue them o'er the waves.
 Sir, shall I dare to tell you what I think?
 You fear what recompense your cares may meet,
 And lest this serpent, in your bosom nursed,
 May punish you one day for sheltering him.
 Be the desire of Greece then satisfied,
 Secure your life by wreaking her revenge;
 Destroy a dangerous foe, who will on you
 Practise the sword hereafter to be used
 Against her.

PYRRHUS.

Greece alarms herself too much
 On my behalf. By more important cares
 I thought her moved, and that such envoy brought
 Some grander project than I yet have heard.
 Who would suppose that Agamemnon's son
 Would deign to intervene in this affair:
 Or that all Greece, after such triumphs won,
 Could thus conspire against an infant's life?
 To whom am I to make the sacrifice?
 Greece may no longer claim his life as hers;
 Or is it not allow'd to me, alone
 Of all the Greeks, to treat as I may please
 A captive won by lot? When 'neath the walls
 Of smoking Troy the victors, blood besprent,
 The spoil divided, to my share there fell
 Andromache and Hector's infant son;

Ulysses made the cup of misery
O'erflow for Hecuba; to Argos went
Cassandra with your sire. Have I controll'd
Them or their captives, or presumed to claim
The fruit of their brave deeds? They fear the day
When Hector shall revive,—his son may take
My life if his be spared. Such caution shows
Care in excess. Misfortunes so remote
Are quite beyond my ken. I see proud Troy
As once she was, Mother of heroes, Queen
Of Asia, crown'd with tow'rs; and then I see
How she fell headlong, how she prostrate lies;
For walls but heaps of ashes I behold,—
A river that runs blood, forsaken fields,
A child in chains; and little can I think
That Troy, so fallen, meditates revenge.
If it were sworn that Hector's son should die,
Why did we let a year pass o'er his head?
Why could we not have slain him in the arms
Of Priam? Troy might well have been his tomb
No less than that of others. Age and Youth
Pleaded alike in vain their weakness then;
War's frenzy and night's darkness, worse than we,
Left no distinctions to our murderous swords.
My rage was fierce as that of any there
Against the vanquish'd. But should cruelty
Outlive one's fury? Can I in cool blood,
Discarding pity, slaughter a poor child?
No, Sir; let Greece hunt up some other prey,
Efface elsewhere all vestiges of Troy:
My enmity is finish'd, and what war
Has spared Epirus safely shall preserve.

ORESTES.

You know, my lord, full well what cunning trick
Brought to the sword a false Astyanax
Instead of Hector's son. It is not Troy .
Nor Trojans, it is Hector they pursue;
Greece tracks the father's footsteps in the son;
The wrath his bloodshed kindled must in blood

Be quench'd, and none but Hector's can avail ;
E'en to Epirus will they follow it :
Prevent them.

PYRRHUS.

No, the challenge I accept
With joy, and in Epirus let them seek
A second Troy : while hatred makes them class
With foes the friend who brought them victory.
Greece will not then for the first time requite
Unjustly all Achilles' services ;
Once Hector profited, the day may come
When Hector's Son shall profit in his turn.

ORESTES.

So Greece in you finds a rebellious son !

PYRRHUS.

Have I then conquer'd only to depend
On her ?

ORESTES.

Hermione will check your course ;
Between her father and yourself her eyes
Will interpose.

PYRRHUS.

She may be dear to me,
And yet I need not be her father's slave
Because I love her. Time may reconcile
Honour, perchance, with what affection claims.
Meanwhile fair Helen's daughter you may see,
I know what tie of blood links you and her.
No longer will I keep you after that ;
Go, say that I refuse what Greece demands.

Scene 3.

PYRRHUS, PHENIX.

PHENIX.

Thus then you send him to his mistress' feet!

PYRRHUS.

Long for the princess has his passion burn'd,
They say.

PHENIX.

What, if that fire should be revived,
His heart be giv'n to her, and hers to him?

PYRRHUS.

Let them love, Phoenix! She may take her leave
With my consent. Ay, let th' enamour'd pair
Go back to Sparta; not a port shall bar
Their exit. Let her spare me more constraint!

PHENIX.

My lord!

PYRRHUS.

I'll bare my soul another time,
Andromache approaches.

Scene 4.

PYRRHUS, ANDEOMACHE, PHENIX, CEPHISSA.

PYRRHUS.

Is it I,
Madam, you seek? May I indulge a hope
So pleasing?

ANDEOMACHE.

I was passing to the place
That holds my son, permitted once a day

To see the only being left to me
Of Troy and Hector: and I have not yet
Wept with him, no, nor held him in my arms
A moment.

PYRRHUS.

Greece, if her alarm tells truth,
Will give you other causes soon for tears.

ANDROMACHE.

What is this terror that has struck her heart?
Has then some Trojan managed to escape?

PYRRHUS.

Not yet extinguish'd is the hatred felt
For Hector. And they dread his son.

ANDROMACHE.

Has found a worthy object! He, poor child,
Yet knows not Hector for his sire, nor you
For master!

PYRRHUS.

All the same, the Greeks demand
His blood, and Agamemnon's son is here
To urge his punishment.

ANDROMACHE.

Will you pronounce
Sentence so hard? My interest in him
Is his sole crime; it is not that they fear
He will avenge his father, but will dry
His mother's tears. He would have filled the place
Of sire and husband. I must lose them all,
And at your hand.

PYRRHUS.

Weep not, I have refused
To do their bidding, tho' they threaten war;
Shall they again with twice five hundred ships

Set sail, to force you to give up your son ;
Tho' all the blood that Helen caused to flow
Must be the price, and, after ten years' war,
My palace sink in flames, I falter not,
And with my own will I defend his life.
But 'mid these perils, suffer'd for your sake,
Will you refuse to grant a kinder look ?
Press'd on all sides, and hated by the Greeks,
Must I still strive against your cruelty ?
My arm is at your service : may I hope
You will accept the heart's devotion too ?
Let not your champion have to reckon you
Among the number of his enemies.

ANDROMACHE.

Think what you do, my lord, what Greece will say.
Can soul so great as yours such weakness show ?
You would not have your generous purpose pass
For the mere madness of a lovesick swain.
How can you wish a captive sad as I
To love you,—I, who cannot bear myself ?
Can eyes that sorrow haunts have charms for you,
Doom'd by yourself to everlasting tears ?
No, no ; respect your captive's misery,
Relieve the wretched, to a mother's arms
Restore a son, withstand the cruelty
Of all the Greeks, nor make my heart the price
Of succour ; and, at need against my will,
Protect him. That were conduct that befits
Achilles' son.

PYRRHUS.

What ! Is your wrath still hot ?
Shall hatred and the punishment it prompts
Ne'er cease ? Much woe I doubtless caused, and Troy
Has seen this hand dyed crimson with your blood,
A hundred times. But, smitten by the shafts
From Beauty's eyes, have I not dearly paid
For all their tears, and long since learn'd remorse ?
I suffer all the ills I gave to Troy ;
Vanquish'd and taken prisoner, with regrets

Loaded, consumed with fires more fierce than those
I kindled. Such anxiety, such tears,
Such restless longings,—was I e'er so harsh
As you are now? Have you not punish'd me
Indeed enough? Nay, let our common foes
Unite us. Tell me only I may hope,
I give you back your son, will be to him
A father, and will teach him to avenge
His country. I myself will punish Greece
For your calamities and mine. One look
Shall give me strength for all. Troy shall revive,
E'en from her ashes; sooner than its siege
Lasted, her walls shall rise, your son be crown'd
Her king.

ANDROMACHE.

I care not for such glory now,
That prospect pleased me while his father lived.
Troy's sacred walls that Hector could not save
May never hope to see our faces more.
My lord, the wretched are content with less;
'Tis exile only that these tears demand.
Far from the Greeks, ay, too, and far from you,
Let me go hide my son, and mourn my loss.
Your love inflames their hatred against us;
Return to Helen's daughter, oh, return!

PYRRHUS.

That can I not. Then why distress me more?
How may a heart that's yours be giv'n to her?
I know that she was promised its command,
I know she hither came to reign as queen;
Fate to Epirus brought you both alike,
Her to impose the chains of slavery,
And you to wear them. But I took no pains
To please her. Seeing how your charms prevail
And hers are scorn'd, it might be rather thought
That she is captive here, and you are queen.
Ah, how a single sigh, of all I breathe
For you, would carry joy if giv'n to her!

•
ANDROMACHE.

How should they not be welcome? Can she e'er
Forget the services that you have wrought?
Hector and Troy are names that do not cause
A shudder, nor is all her tenderness
Devoted to the dead. Ah, what a loss
Was mine, bitter to think on! Slaying him
Your father made himself immortal, gain'd
The crown of all his glory, and my tears
Have made you both renown'd.

PYRRHUS.

It needs must be
That I obey you, Madam, and forget, •
Nay, hate you. Love has been too violent
To change its course to mere indifference.
Be well assured, the heart henceforth that loves
No more with passion must with fury hate.
Nought will I in my righteous anger spare;
The son shall answer for the mother's scorn;
Greece asks his life, why should I always stoop
To save th' ungrateful? I'll do so no more.

ANDROMACHE.

Alas, then he must die! His mother's tears
His sole protection, and his innocence—
And yet, perchance, so wretched is my lot,
His death may lift this load of misery.
Life and its woes I bore but for his sake;
To follow him will bring me to his sire.
Thus reunited, thanks to you, my lord,
We three shall—

•
PYRRHUS.

Madam, go and see your son;
The sight of him may teach your heart to shun
The path to which your anger beckons you.
I'll choose another hour to learn my fate.
Think how to save him, while you clasp him close.

ACT II.

Scene 1.

HERMIONE, CLEONE.

HERMIONE

Yes, he shall see me, since you'll have it so ;
That pleasure will I grant him once again.
Soon Pylades will bring him ; but were I
To use my judgment, it should not be so.

CLEONE.

What evil lurks there in the sight of him ?
Say, is he not the same Orestes still
For whose return you sigh'd a hundred times,
Whose love and constancy has been the theme
Of your regret ?

HERMIONE.

Paid with ingratitude !

That love it is which makes his presence here
Repugnant ; shame for me, triumph for him,
To see my misery so like his own !
Is that the proud Hermione, he'll say,
Lo, she who scorn'd me once herself despised !
The wretch who on her heart set price so high
Learns in her turn the pangs of outraged love
Oh. Heav'ns !

CLEONE

Dispel these most unworthy fears :

Too deeply has he felt your pow'r to charm.
He comes to urge his love, not to insult,
He brings a heart from which he cannot blot
Your image. But you have not told me yet
What writes your sire.

HERMIONE.

If Pyrrhus still delays,
And if he will not let the Trojan die,
My father bids me with the Greeks depart.

CLEONE.

'Tis well: then hear Orestes. You at least
May finish that which Pyrrhus has begun;
You must forestall him to obtain success.
Have you not told me that you hated him?

HERMIONE.

Hate him, Cleone? Can just pride do less,
When he forgets the favour freely giv'n?
That heart was treacherous which I learn'd to love;
Too dear he was, not to be hated now!

CLEONE.

Fly from him then, and since you are beloved—

HERMIONE.

Ah, let my rage have time to grow more strong;
Leave me to guard myself against my foe.
Cleone, it is terrible to part,
And he will force me to it but too well,
The faithless wretch!

CLEONE.

Wait you for some new wrong?
To love his slave, before your very eyes!
What more can make him odious, if not that?
What greater insult can he offer yet?
Had he known how, he would have left undone
Nothing that could displease you.

HERMIONE.

Why provoke
Fresh torture? I would fain disguise the truth.
Try to believe not what your eyes have seen;

Think that my love is banish'd ; give me joy
 That I have conquer'd, and my heart is steel'd
 Against its weakness. Make me think so too.
 You'd have me fly ; there's naught to hinder it,
 Let us depart, and leave him to enjoy
 A conquest that degrades him ; to his slave
 Himself submissive. Let us fly ! But what
 If Faith and Duty should reclaim his heart,
 If he should crave his pardon at my feet,
 And Love have pow'r to make him all my own ?
 But no, he only seeks to humble me.
 Yet let us stay to mar their happiness,
 Finding some pleasure still in spoiling theirs ;
 Or, making him renounce his solemn pledge,
 Render him guilty in the eyes of Greece.
 Already have I drawn upon the son
 Their anger, I would have them ask of him
 The mother too, and so those pangs repay
 Which she has made me feel. Let her lose him,
 Nay, let him cause her death.

CLEONE.

Think you that she,
 Whose eyes run down with tears, can pleasure find
 In trying to supplant you, that, bow'd down
 With grief, she courts her persecutor's love ?
 What signs have shown her anguish soothed thereby ?
 Why is her soul then plunged in misery ?
 Why 'gainst a favour'd lover so severe ?

HERMIONE.

Ah, I have lent too credulous an ear
 To faithless vows, and utter'd what I felt.
 I saw no danger in sincerity,
 My eyes unguarded let their secret out,
 And my own heart pleaded his cause too well.
 What woman would not have declared her love,
 As I did, trusting to his solemn oaths ?
 Did his eye scorn me then, as it does now ?
 You cannot but remember all combined

To aid his suit,—my family avenged,
The joy of Greece, our vessels charged with spoils
From Troy, his father's exploits by the son's
Eclipsed, his passion deem'd to pass my own,
My heart—Yes, and his fame e'en dazzled you;
E'er he betray'd me, all of you conspired
To that same end. Enough; if Pyrrhus has,
I have not ceased to feel; Orestes' heart
Is noble as his deeds, and he can love
Without return.—Ay, and perhaps can make
Himself beloved. I'll see him.

CLEONE.

Look, he comes.

HERMIONE.

Ah me! I had not thought he was so nigh.

Scene 2.

HERMIONE, ORESTES, CLEONE.

HERMIONE.

Sir, shall I think some tender traces left
Of former Love prompt you to visit me,
In my distress, or is it Duty's voice,
And that alone, which urges you to come?

ORESTES.

Such is the fatal blindness of my heart,
Known to you well, that I am destined still
To come, and come again, to worship you,
In spite of all my vows to come no more.
To see you will, I know, reopen wounds;
Each step that brings me near makes me forsworn;
I know it, and I blush thereat. But Heav'n,
That saw how our last parting wrung my heart,
Be witness how I strove to free myself,

By certain death, from oath so hard to keep
 And ceaseless torture; how to savage tribes,
 Whose gods are only pleased with human blood,
 I offer'd life; they shut their temple doors,
 Sparing to take such willing sacrifice.
 To you at length I come, and from your eyes
 Must seek the Death that shuns my close pursuit,
 And their indifference shall end despair;
 They need but cut the last fond cord of hope
 To bring the fatal hour for which I yearn,
 They need but say what they have said before,—
 Said always. For a year past, that has been
 My only aim: be yours the victim's blood
 That Scythians might have spilt instead of you,
 Had any so relentless there been found.

HERMIONE.

Have done, Sir, with these accents of despair;
 With matters more momentous you are charged.
 Why talk of Scythia, or my cruelty?
 Think of the many kings you represent.
 And must their vengeance on your transports hang?
 Is it Orestes' blood that they demand?
 Discharge the office they imposed on you.

ORESTES.

Pyrrhus refuses, and my task is done.
 Madam, he sends me back. Some other pow'r
 Makes him defend the cause of Hector's son.

HERMIONE.

False and forsworn!

ORESTES.

So, ready to depart,
 My own fate at your lips I come to learn.
 Ere utter'd, your reply I think I hear,
 That you detest me in your secret heart.

HERMIONE.

What always so unjust? Why will your grief

For ever of my enmity complain?
How have I shown the harshness that you blame
So often? 'Twas obedience to my sire
That brought me hither; but who knows if I
Have not been sick at heart since then, and shared
Alarms no less than yours? I may have shed,
In this Epirus, bitter tears And none
Can say I have not sometimes wish'd you here,
Despite my duty.

ORESTES.

Wish'd me here! Oh, joy!—
But can it be to me that you address
These heavenly words? Open your eyes, and see
Orestes, upon whom they frown'd so long.

HERMIONE.

Yes, you—who first taught them to know their pow'r,
Whose love with their attractions grew, whose worth
I could not but esteem, and who have had
My sighs, and whom indeed I fain would love.

ORESTES.

I understand how hopeless is my lot;
Your heart is giv'n to Pyrrhus, and to me
Vain wishes.

HERMIONE.

Ah, you need not envy him,
Unless you crave my hatred.

ORESTES.

Yes; for then
Love well might follow from a source opposed;
I cannot please you whom you fain would love,
But, if you wish'd to hate me, Love alone
Would be obey'd, and I should win your heart.
Ye gods! Such worship, and such tender love—
Speak they not for me, could you lend an ear?
Your voice alone supports a prior claim
For Pyrrhus, it may be against your will,

Against his, certainly ; for in his soul
He hates you, loves another—

HERMIONE.

Who has dared
To tell you that he scorns me? Have his looks
And words reveal'd it? Think you that my eyes
Can light no lasting fire, but soon must rouse
Contempt? Perhaps more favourable judge
May somewhere else be found.

ORESTES.

'Tis well to taunt
Me thus! Am I the one who scorns your charms?
Have you not tried my constancy enough?
Am I a witness that your eyes lack pow'r?
Despise them? Ah, how gladly would they see
My rival so despise them as do I!

HERMIONE.

What care I, Sir, whether he loves or hates?
Go, and against a rebel arm all Greece;
Pay him the price of disobedience;
Go, let them make this land a second Troy!
Will you say now, my heart is giv'n to him?

ORESTES.

Madam, do more, and come to Greece yourself.
Will you remain here as a hostage? Come;
To every heart let your fair eyes appeal,
Till common hatred prompts our joint attack.

HERMIONE.

What if he wed Andromache meanwhile?

ORESTES.

Madam!

HERMIONE.

What deep disgrace must then be mine,
To have this Phrygian woman hold my place!

ORESTES.

And yet you hate him! Madam, own the truth;
We cannot shut Love's fires within the breast,
Our very eyes betray us,—silence, speech;
And fires we hide in vain burst forth more fierce.

HERMIONE.

Your mind is prepossess'd, I see it well,
And spreads a deadly venom o'er my words,
In every argument detects deceit,
And thinks my hatred prompted by my love.
I must explain myself, and you shall act
Accordingly. You know 'twas Duty led
My footsteps hither, and detains me here;
I cannot leave till Pyrrhus or my sire
Compel me. Make my father understand
The foe of Greece will form no marriage bond
With us; between the Trojan and myself
Make Pyrrhus choose, which he will keep, and which
Dismiss. Farewell. I wait but his consent
To follow you.

Scene 3.

ORESTES.

Yes, you will follow me,
No doubt of that. Already his consent
Is sure, nor need I fear that Pyrrhus wants
To keep you, for he has no eyes forsooth
Save for his dear Andromache, all else
Irksome, and seeks some pretext that may part
Himself and you. One word, and all is done!
What joy to rob Epirus of a prize
So rare! Troy's relics she may save, and keep
Unharm'd brave Hector's widow and his son,
And thousand others; 'tis enough for me,
That, ne'er again to see thee or thy prince,
Hermione departs.

I.

L

Good Fortune brings
Him hither. To such charms, Love, close his eyes.
While we hold converse.

Scene 4.

PYRRHUS, ORESTES, PHENIX.

PYRRHUS.

I have sought you, Sir,
To own that in a fit of violence
I fought against your reasons. " Since I went,
Their justice and their force have shown themselves.
I feel, like you, that I have thwarted Greece,
My father's efforts, and, indeed, my own,
In aiding Troy, frustrating all achieved
Both by Achilles and myself; nor now
Do I condemn resentment which was based
On solid ground. Your victim soon shall be
At your disposal.

ORESTES.

By this firm resolve,
Prudent as firm, a caitiff's blood buys peace.

PYRRHUS.

And to assure you further, I consent
To wed^o Hermione, the pledge of peace
For ever. Such a pleasing spectacle
Can have no better witness here than you,
Who represent all Greece, and most her sire,
For in yourself his brother lives again.
Go to her, tell her that to-morrow morn
I will receive her at your hands with peace.

ORESTES (*aside*).

Great gods!

Scene 5.

PYRRHUS, PHŒNIX.

PYRRHUS.

Well, Phœnix, has Love won the day?
Say, do your eyes refuse to know me still?

PHŒNIX.

I see you as you were; that righteous wrath
Restores you to the Greeks and to yourself.
No more the plaything of a servile flame,
'Tis Pyrrhus, 'tis Achilles' son, and more
His rival, who at last obeys the laws
Of honour, and a second triumph wins
O'er Troy.

PYRRHUS.

Say rather that my victory
Begins to-day when I can feel its joy
And my heart, lifted from its low estate,
Seems to have triumph'd o'er a thousand foes
In crushing love. Think, Phœnix, what a host
Of troubles I avoid that follow close
On passion; how content to sacrifice
Duty and friendship, danger I despised,
Courting destruction from the arms of Greece,
Might I but win a single look of love.

PHŒNIX.

I bless, my lord, the kind severity
Which gives you back—

PYRRHUS.

See how she treated me!
I thought that, when the mother's fears were roused,
She would have yielded for her infant's sake,
Disarm'd by his caresses, but I found
No signs of weakness mingled with her tears.

Embitter'd by her woes, more fierce she seem'd
Each time the name of Hector pass'd her lips.
Oft as I promised to protect her son,
" 'Tis Hector," she would say, as in her arms
She held him, "his those eyes, that mouth, the heart
Already bold. My husband I embrace
In this his image." Does she think that I
Will let her keep him thus to feed her love,
For Hector?

PHENIX.

Such were doubtless the return
That she would make. But leave her now.

PYRRHUS.

I see

How consciousness of beauty flatters her,
And makes her proudly wait, despite my wrath,
To see me at her knees. Rather at mine
I'll see her crouch in vain; eternal hate
Parts Hector's widow and Achilles' son!

PHENIX.

Then speak of her no more to me, my liege.
Go, see Hermione; and at her feet
Be your sole thought her pleasure, and forget
What's past. Prepare her for the nuptial rites
Yourself, nor to a rival leave that task
Who loves her but too well.

PYRRHUS.

Think you will she
Be jealous if I wed Hermione?

PHENIX.

What, harping on the Trojan woman still!
What matters it to you if vex'd or glad?
What spell attracts you tow'rd's her, in despite
Of your own will?

ANDRUS.

I have not told her all
I meant to say ; I show'd but half the rage
I feel ; she knows not what a bitter foe
She has in me. Let us return and flout
Her vengeance, to my hatred give full scope,
And see her pride and beauty in the dust.
Come.

PHENIX.

Go and cast yourself before her, Sir,
Go swear that in your heart you love her still,
And so encourage her to scorn you more !

PYRRHUS.

I see you think my heart, ready to find
Excuses, hankers after her, and seeks
Atonement.

PHENIX.

Yes, you love her That's enough.

PYRRHUS.

Love her, forsooth, who hates me all the more,
The more she's flatter'd ! Friendless, with no hope
But over me ! A stranger, ay, a slave !
I can destroy her son, perhaps I ought.
To her I give that son, myself, my throne ;
And in her treacherous heart can gain no rank
Better than that of persecutor ! No,
No, I have sworn it, my revenge is sure,
And shall for once her hatred justify ;
Her infant I abandon, let her shed
What tears she may, call me whatever name
Anguish can prompt ! Ah, what a sight, to-day,
Her eyes will see ! Phoenix, 'twill be her death,
And I shall cause it, yea, myself shall hold
The dagger to her breast !

PHENIX.

Why blazon it
Abroad? Too highly did you rate your strength
Some hours ago.

PYRRHUS.

Pardon the tenderness
Of an old wound. You need not fear it, match'd
With my resentment; 'tis the final spark
Of love extinct. I'll follow your advice:
Must I give up her son, and must I see
The princess?

PHENIX.

Yes, Sire; and with humble vows
Assure her—

PYRRHUS.

What I promised, I'll perform.

ACT III.

Scene 1.

ORESTES, PYLADES.

PYLADES.

My friend, restrain this most imprudent rage
You are no more yourself, I know you not.
Let me—

ORESTES.

No, no, your counsel comes too late,
The voice of Reason only wearies me.
I must cut short the torture of this life.
I'll bear her hence, or perish. My resolve
Is taken, and I'll execute the same:
Yes, that I will.

PYLADES.

. By all means be it so ;
I sanction that. But, still, think where you are ;
To show your hand is but to court defeat ;
Learn to disguise your feelings, calm your rage ;
Bid your eyes keep the secret of your heart.
These guards, these very walls, each breath of air
Serve Pyrrhus, and yet more Hermione ;
Hide your resentment with most care from her.
Why did you seek her, in the name of Heav'n,
In such a state ?

ORESTES.

I knew not what I did ;
Master'd by rage, I may have gone so far
As to vent open threats against them both.

PYLADES.

And what fruit did that fit of passion bear ?

ORESTES.

Was not the blow sufficient to distract
The coolest, and drive reason from her seat ?
'To-morrow he will wed Hermione,
And from my hand receive her, as a mark
Of honour. Sooner may it with his blood—

. PYLADES.

You blame him for a purpose he pursues
In desperation. Rather, pity him
As I do you : his tortures are as great.

ORESTES.

Nay, I know well, he laughs at my despair ;
He scorn'd her till he knew her loved by me,
Her charms were lost upon him but for that ;
He takes her but to tear her from my arms.
Gods ! when already I had deem'd her won,
Prepared to leave his sight for evermore ;
Her heart, divided between love and hate,

But waited his refusal to become
My own. Her eyes were open'd, and her ears
Hearken'd to me with pity. One word more,
And sure success.

PYLADES.

You think so?

ORESTES.

Ay, her wrath
Was hot against the wretch.

PYLADES.

Never more loved !
Had Pyrrhus giv'n her up, do you suppose
No other pretext would have held her back ?
Let not her charms beguile you more, but fly
From her for ever, rather than attempt
To carry off a Fury who detests
Your love, and would embitter all your life
With vain regret, having so nearly gain'd
Her dearest object.

ORESTES.

'Tis that very thought
Urges me on. All things would smile on her,
And nought but bootless rage be mine, compell'd
To seek oblivion far from her, once more
An exile. No, those torments she must share
Which I have borne too long alone. Enough
Of being pitied. She shall, in her turn,
Feel what it is to fear me, weep with woe,
And call me cruel, e'en as I did her !

PYLADES.

Thus as a ravisher Orestes crowns
His embassy !

ORESTES.

What matter, Pylades ?
Greece shall not wreak revenge at my expense,
Nor an ungrateful princess mock my tears.

How will our country's praises profit me,
When jeer'd at in Epirus as a fool?
What would you? To confess the truth, I feel
My innocence a heavy load to bear.
When did the gods before prove so perverse
As to pursue the guiltless, and leave crime
Unpunish'd? Wheresoe'er I turn my eyes,
I see around me troubles that condemn
Their justice. Let me earn their wrath, deserve
Their hatred, eat the fruit if I must pay
The penalty of crime. But why draw down
Their anger on yourself, when aimed at me?
My friendship has procured you harm enough;
Leave me alone to guilt and misery.
Dear Pylades, your pity warps your sense;
Avoid the dangers that encompass me.
Convey to Greece the infant given up
By Pyrrhus. Go!

PYLADES.

We'll carry off his bride!
A brave heart faces peril without fear.
Where love leads, friendship follows, and can act
As boldly. Let us arm your company
With zeal; our fleet is ready, and the breeze
Invites us. Every winding passage dark
I know; the sea washes these palace walls,
And by a secret way this very night
Your prize shall be conducted to your ship.

ORESTES.

Dear friend, I trespass on your love too far;
Those griefs, that you alone could pity, beg
Forgiveness for a wretch, who loses all
He sets his heart on; hated by the world
He hates himself. But under happier stars
I, in my turn,—

PYLADES.

Do not betray yourself;
Before the blow conceal your purpose, that

Is all I ask ; till then forget your wrongs,
Forget your love. But see, she comes.

ORESTES.

Go, friend.

Answer for her as I will for myself.

Scene 2.

HERMIONE, ORESTES, CLEONE.

ORESTES.

Well, Madam, you have won, thanks to my care :
I have seen Pyrrhus, and your marriage now
Will soon take place.

HERMIONE.

So I am told, and you
Were seeking me that I might be prepared.

ORESTES.

And will you not reject these tardy vows ?

HERMIONE.

Who would have fancied Pyrrhus faithful still ?
That passion could have been delay'd so long
From bursting into flame, and its return
Should linger till I was about to leave him ?
I'll think with you, 'tis Greece he dreads ; not lov
But prudence moves him ; o'er your soul my eyes
Had pow'r more absolute.

ORESTES.

No, no ; 'tis love,
I cannot doubt it ; and your eyes have wrought
All that they wish'd, nor would displease him now

HERMIONE.

What can I do, Sir, when my faith is pledged ?

Rob him, of what it was not I who gave?
The star that rules a princess is not love,
No other glory than obedience left
For her. Yet I was going, and you saw
How I made duty yield to your desire.

ORESTES.

Ah, cruel one, you knew—But every heart
Is free to follow its own choice, and yours
Was at your own disposal; and if giv'n,
I had no right to claim it as my own.
And yet I hoped; but Fortune more than you
I blame, and why should I your patience try
With vain complaints? Act as your duty bids,
Mine is to spare you words of sad reproach.

Scene 3.

HERMIONE, CLEONE.

HERMIONE.

Did you expect his wrath to be so mild?

CLEONE.

A silent sorrow need not be for that
Less fatal. As the cause of his own woe
I pity him the more; 'tis his own stroke
That slays him. How long has your marriage been
In preparation? When Orestes spoke,
Pyrrhus declared himself.

HERMIONE.

You think 'tis fear?
Fear! And of whom? Those who for twice five years
Fled before Hector, and, Achilles lost,
Crouch'd in alarm within their burning ships,
And who, but for his son, would have left Troy
Unpunish'd, and foregone a fruitless quest!

Why should he fight against himself? Whate'er
He does, he wishes; if he marries me,
He loves me. Let Orestes, if he will,
Charge me with all his sorrows, better cheer
Awaits me than his sighs. Pyrrhus returns!
Ah, dear Cleone, what a rapturous thought!
Know you his exploits? Have you heard them told,
Too many to be number'd? And himself,
So brave, so charming, and so faithful too,
As shown at last, his glory nothing lacks.
Think—

CLEONE.

Hide your feelings! Look, your rival comes,
To cast her troubles, doubtless, at your feet.

HERMIONE.

Ah, 'tis too soon to check this flood of joy!
Let us begone; what should I say to her?

Scene 4.

ANDROMACHE, HERMIONE, CLEONE, CEPHISS.

ANDROMACHE.

Why fly you, Madam? Is it not a sight
To please you, Hector's widow at your knees,
Weeping? But not with tears of jealousy
I come, nor do I envy you the heart
Surrender'd to your charms. A cruel hand
Robb'd me of him whom only I admired.
Love's flame was lit by Hector long ago,
With him it was extinguish'd in the tomb.
But he has left a son. Some day you'll know
How closely to one's heart a son can cling;
But you will never know, I wish it not,
How keen the pang when danger threatens him,
And they would take him from you, all that's left
To soothe a blighted heart. Ah, when worn out

With ten long years of woe, the Trojans sought
Your mother's life, on Hector I prevail'd
To succour her. O'er Pyrrhus you have pow'r
As I had then o'er Hector. Can they dread
The infant he has left? Him let me hide
In some far distant isle. And they may trust
My fears to keep him there, taught but to weep
With me.

HERMIONE.

I feel for you, but duty holds
My tongue tied, when my sire declares his will :
It is by him that Pyrrhus' wrath is stirr'd.
But who can bend him better than yourself ?
His soul has long been subject to your eyes ;
Make him pronounce the word, and I'll consent.

Scene 5.

ANDROMACHE, CEPHISSA.

ANDROMACHE.

How scornfully did she refuse my prayer !

CEPHISSA.

Accept her counsel. See him, as she says :
One look of yours may Greece and her confound—
But, look, he seeks you of his own accord.

Scene 6.

PYRRHUS, ANDROMACHE, PHENIX, CEPHISSA.

PYRRHUS (*to PHENIX*).

Where is the princess ? Said you not that she
Was here ?

PHENIX.

I thought so.

ANDROMACHE (*to* CEPHISSA).

Now you see what pow'r
My eyes have over him !

PYRRHUS.

What says she ?

ANDROMACHE.

Is lost !

All

PHENIX.

Hermione is gone, and we
Will follow.

CEPHISSA.

Speak ! Why obstinately dumb ?

ANDROMACHE.

Has he not promised them my child ?

CEPHISSA.

Given him up.

But not

ANDROMACHE.

Vain are my tears, his death
Is certain.

PYRRHUS.

How her pride disdains to look
My way !

ANDROMACHE.

I should but irritate him more.
Let us retire.

PYRRHUS.

Come, Hector's son shall be
Yielded to Greece.

ANDROMACHE (*throwing herself at his feet*).

Stop, Sire. What will you do?
Give up the son? Why not the mother then?
Where is the kindness that you swore to me
So lately? Can I touch no chord at least
Of pity? Does this sentence bar all hope
Of pardon?

PYRRHUS.

Phoenix knows my word is pledged.

ANDROMACHE.

No dangers were too great for you to brave
On my behalf!

PYRRHUS.

Blind then, I now can see.
Your wishes might have won his pardon once;
You ne'er so much as ask'd it. Now you come
Too late.

ANDROMACHE.

Full well you understood, my lord,
The sigh that fear'd repulse. Forgive the trace
Of pride, that died not with my royal rank,
And made me shrink from importunity.
My lord, you know, had it not been for you,
Andromache would never have embraced
A master's knees.

PYRRHUS.

No, in your secret soul
You hate me, scorn to owe me anything.
This son, the only object of your care,
You would have loved him less, had he been saved
Thro' me. You hate me with a bitter scorn,
You hate me more than all the Greeks together.
Enjoy at leisure such a noble rage.
Come, Phoenix.

ANDROMACHE.

I will go where Hector's gone.

CEPHISSA.

Madam—

ANDROMACHE.

What further can I say to him ?
 The author of my woes, he knows them all.
 (To PYRRHUS.) See to what state you have reduced me,
 Sire!

I've seen my father slain, our walls enwrapt
 In flames, and all our family cut off,
 My husband's bloody corpse dragg'd thro' the dust,
 His only son reserved for chains with me.
 For his sake I endure to live a slave.
 Yea, more, this thought has sometimes brought relief,
 That Fate has fix'd my place of exile here ;
 The son of many kings beneath your sway
 Is happier as a slave than he could be
 Elsewhere, and I had hoped his prison walls
 Might be a place of refuge. Priam found
 Achilles could respect his fallen state ;
 I thought his son more generous still. That trust,
 My Hector, pardon, when I deem'd thy foe
 Too noble to commit a dastard's crime !
 Ah, would he but allow us to abide
 Where for thine ashes I have raised a tomb,
 And, ending there his hatred and our woes,
 Divide us not from thy beloved remains !

• • PYRRHUS.

Go. and await me. Phoenix.

Scene 7.

PYRRHUS, ANDROMACHE, CEPHISSA.

PYRRHUS.

Madam, stay.
 Your tears may yet win back this cherish'd son
 Yes, I regret that, moving you to weep,

I arm'd you with a weapon 'gainst myself ;
I thought I could have brought more hatred here.
You might at least consent to look at me :
See, are my eyes those of an angry judge,
Whose pleasure 'tis to cause you misery ?
Why force me to be faithless to yourself ?
Now for your son's sake let us cease to hate.
'Tis I who urge you, save the child from death.
Must sighs of mine beg you to spare his life ?
And must I clasp your knees to plead for him ?
Once more, but once, save him and save yourself.
I know what solemn vows for you I break,
What hatred I bring down upon myself.
Hermione shall go, and on her brow
For crown I set a burning brand of shame :
And in the fane deck'd for her marriage rites
Her royal diadem yourself shall wear.
This offer, lady, is no longer one
You can afford to scorn. Perish or reign !
A year's contempt has made me desperate,
Nor can I any longer live in doubt,
Harass'd by fears and mingling threats with groans.
To lose you is to die,—'tis death to wait.
I leave you to consider, and will come
To bring you to the temple where this child
My fury shall destroy before your eyes,
Or where in love I crown you as my queen.

Scene 8.

ANDROMACHE, CEPHISSA.

CEPHISSA.

Is't not as I foretold ? In spite of Greece,
You are still mistress of your destiny.

ANDROMACHE.

Alas, that it should be as you have said !
[have no choice but to condemn my son.

CEPHISSA.

That were to stretch fidelity too far.
Excess of virtue may be fraught with guilt.
Hector himself would urge a milder course.

ANDROMACHE.

Pyrrhus, in Hector's place! I loathe the thought.

CEPHISSA.

Think of his son, torn from your arms by force;
More than aught else his shade would blush at that.
It would not shame him that your conqueror
Should reinstate you in your royal rank,
Trample your foes beneath his feet in wrath,
Forget that fierce Achilles was his sire,
And frustrate all his exploits.

ANDROMACHE.

How can I
Cease to remember them, tho' he forget?
Hector's unburied corpse, dishonour'd, dragg'd
Around the walls of Troy? His father slain
Before mine eyes, and grasping as he fell
The altar stain'd with his own blood? That night,
That cruel night, think how its horrors brought
Eternal night to Troy! Recall the look
Of Pyrrhus, crossing in the lurid light
Our burning threshold; how his eyeballs glared,
My fallen brothers spurn'd beneath his tread,
Kindling the carnage, dyed from head to foot
With gore! Canst hear the victor's shouts, the groans
From dying lips, as fire and sword rush on?
Canst see Andromache's despair, and how
Pyrrhus confronts her with those frightful deeds
Wherewith he won his glory? There behold
The husband you would give me! No, my friend,
I will not be th' accomplice of his crimes.
His latest victim let him make of me,
And I without a murmur will submit.

CEPHISSA.

Then let us go and see your son expire ;
Your presence only do they wait for. How
You shudder !

ANDROMACHE.

Yes, remembrance sends a pang
That pierces deep. What ! See him perish too,
My only joy, on whom my Hector stamp'd
His image, token of the love I lost !
Ah me ! I call to mind the day he sought
Achilles, fatal day for him. He press'd
His boy to his courageous heart, and said,
Drying my tears,—“ Dear wife, I know not how
Fate may decide the fight to which I go.
I leave you this my son, a faithful pledge ;
And should he lose his father, be to him
Father and mother both ; if you hold dear
The happiness we shared, then show to him
How much you loved me.” Shall that precious blood
Be shed before my eyes, his line extinct
With him ? Ah, cruel King, must my offence
Be counted his ? He has not hated thee,
Nor yet reproach'd thee with his kinsmen's death,
Resenting not the ills he cannot feel.
Yet thou must die, my son, unless I turn
The sword aside that hangs above thy head.
The choice is mine ; and shall I let it fall ?
No, never can I suffer thee to die.
Let us find Pyrrhus. No, Cephissa, go,
Find him for me.

CEPHISSA.

What shall I say to him ?

ANDROMACHE.

Tell him a mother loves her son enough—
But has he sworn indeed to slay the child ?
Can passion make Pyrrhus so merciless ?

CEPHISSA.

Madam, in fury he will soon return.

ANDROMACHE.

Then go, assure him—

CEPHISSA.

Of your faith, or what?

ANDROMACHE.

Alas! have I that promise still to give?
O ashes of my husband and my sire!
How dearly must I buy thy life, my son!
Come, let us go.

CEPHISSA.

Whither? With what resolve?

ANDROMACHE.

To Hector's tomb, there to consult his will.

ACT IV.

Scene I.

ANDROMACHE, CEPHISSA.

CEPHISSA.

My lady, 'tis your husband, doubt it not;
'Tis Hector works this miracle in you!
Surely he wishes Troy should rise again
Under that son whose life he bids you guard.
Pyrrhus has promised you the boy. Just now
You heard him say he waits but for your word
To make him yours; and you may trust his love.
Your heart contents him; father, sceptre, friends,
He recks them not, if you will reign o'er him
And o'er his people. Does he then deserve
Hatred? Indignant, he confronts the Greeks,
And pities the poor babe no less than you,

Guards him from outrage, and withstands their rage,
Exposing his own life to shelter his.
But all is ready. You have promised—

ANDROMACHE.

Yes,

I will be there. Let us go see my son.

CEPHISSA.

Why in such haste? No one forbids you now
To visit him; therewith be satisfied,
And soon your tenderness shall have full scope
In many a fond and unrestrain'd caress.
Will it not bring you joy to rear your babe
No longer for a life of slavery,
But to revive the glories of his line?

ANDROMACHE.

Cephisso, 'tis the last time I shall see
My child.

CEPHISSA.

Why, what is this?

ANDROMACHE.

O my dear friend,
With whom my soul should wear no mask, for you
Have proved in all my trouble faithful still,
I hoped you knew me better than to deem
Myself so faithless found as to betray
The husband who within my heart survives,
That, caring not how much I vex'd the dead,
I should think only of my own repose.
Is that to keep my promise made so oft
To Hector's ashes? But I am obliged
To save his son. Pyrrhus, on wedding me,
Vows to protect him,—I may trust his word.
I know his nature, violent but sincere;
He will do more, Cephisso, than he said.
And I rely too on the wrath of Greece.
Her hatred will on Hector's son bestow

A father. Since a victim is required
I will assure to Pyrrhus all that's left
Of life to me, and by most sacred bonds
Indissolubly bind him to my boy.
But straightway shall this hand with fatal stroke
Sever the chord of life no longer true,
And so preserve me stainless, and yet pay
Pyrrhus his due, nor fail in what I owe
To son and husband, ay, and to myself.
This is the harmless plot my love suggests,
Or rather Hector's spirit. So, alone,
Him and my sires I join. Close you mine eyes.

CEPHISSA.

Ah, if you die, think not that I will live.

ANDROMACHE.

Nay, I forbid you, friend, to follow me.
My only treasure to your care I trust :
You lived for me, live now for Hector's son.
Sole guardian of the hopes of fallen Troy,
Her royal line requires your constant care.
Watch Pyrrhus well, and make him keep his faith ;
If he shall need it, speak to him of me.
Remind him I consented to be his
Before my death, teach him to prize that bond
And blot out all resentment from his soul ;
That, leaving him my son, I show'd how much
I valued him. And to that son make known
The heroes of his race ; direct his steps
To follow them ; tell him of all their fame,
Of what they did rather than what they were.
Dwell on his father's virtues day by day,
And sometimes whisper of a mother's love.
But of avenging me he must not dream ;
His master's friendship let him strive to win.
Regarding his high birth with modesty,
Let him remember, tho' of Hector's blood,
Troy lives in him alone ; and for his sake,
In one day, I lay down life, hatred, love !

CEPHISSA.

Alas!

ANDROMACHE.

You must not come with me, unless
Your heart is brave and can command your tears.
Cephisssa, dry your eyes. I hear a step.
Remember your great trust. Hermione
Approaches; let us shun her violence.

Scene 2.

HERMIONE, CLEONE.

CLEONE.

This silence, Madam, fills me with surprise;
You utter not a word; this cruel slight
Seems not to ruffle your tranquillity!
Tame you suffer such a rude rebuff
Who shudder'd but to hear your rival's name!
You who could scarce endure without despair
The passing glance that Pyrrhus cast on her!
He weds her, makes her partner of his throne,
And plights the troth so lately giv'n to you;
Yet still your lips are dumb, your tongue disdains
To upbraid the traitor with deserved reproach!
I fear what such a fatal calm forebodes!
It would be better far—

HERMIONE.

You sent for him,

Is it not so?

CLEONE.

Orestes will be here,
And, as you may believe, will place himself
Wholly at your disposal, without hope
Of recompense. Your eyes are sure enough
To charm him. See, he enters.

Scene 3.

ORESTES, HERMIONE, CLEONE.

ORESTES.

Can it be
That I, for once, in seeking you obey
Your bidding, or has false hope flatter'd me?
Have you indeed wish'd me to come to you?
Shall I believe your eyes, at last disarm'd,
Will—

HERMIONE.

I would know whether you love me, Sir.

ORESTES.

Love you! Great gods! My vows too hard to keep,
My flight, return, reverence that curb'd reproach,
My dark despair, my eyes all drown'd in tears:
What witness will you, if you trust not these?

HERMIONE.

I trust them all; avenge me.

ORESTES.

Let us go,
My mistress, and once more set Greece on fire.
This arm shall make your name renown'd; and you
Shall rival Helen, I the King of Men.
Let us revive the miseries of Troy
Here in Epirus, and our fathers' fame
Eclipse. Yes, I am ready; let us start.

HERMIONE.

No, let us stay, nor carry these affronts
So far. What! crown the insults of my foes,
And wait elsewhere to wreak a slow revenge!
Resign myself to the arbitrament of war,
That after all might fail to vindicate

My wrongs! I will have all Epirus weep
When I depart. Avenge me in an hour,
Or not at all. Delay,—and you refuse.
Haste to the temple. You must slay—

ORESTES.

Ay, whom?

HERMIONE.

Pyrrhus.

ORESTES.

The King?

HERMIONE.

Your hatred hesitates?

Run quickly thither, lest I call you back.
Speak not of duties I would fain forget,
Nor will I hear a word in his defence,
And least from you.

ORESTES.

From me! Your tenderness
Has stamp'd his crime too deeply on my soul.
Let us take vengeance, but by other means,
Become his foes, but not his murderers;
And with the arms of justice ruin him.
Shall I for answer to the Greeks bring back
His head? And have I taken on myself
This charge from them, to turn assassin? No.
In Heaven's name let Greece the challenge meet,
And crush'd beneath her hatred let him die.
The name of king is sacred, and the brow—

HERMIONE.

Is not my sentence then enough for you?
That my offended dignity demands
A victim to be offer'd to myself?
That if you quell the tyrant you shall have
Me for reward? That I hate him whom once
I loved. Yes, I confess it, he knew how
To win my heart; whether my father's will
Or inclination moved me matters not.

Act on that knowledge. Tho' he broke his vows,
Tho' with just horror I regard his crime,
Yet, while he lives, fear I may still forgive.
Distrust my wavering wrath, till death removes
The monster. For unless he dies to-day,
To-morrow I may love him.

ORESTES.

Then must death
Prevent his pardon. How shall I proceed?
Can I so soon avenge your injuries?
Where lies the path that leads him to his doom?
I have but just set foot upon this soil,
And you would have me overturn the State,
And slay the King; and for his punishment
You grant me but a day; no, not an hour.
It must be done before his people's eyes;
My victim to the altar shall be brought.
No longer I demur, I will but go
And view th' appointed place of sacrifice:
This night I do your bidding, and he dies!

HERMIONE.

Meanwhile to-day he weds Andromache;
Already in the shrine his throne is set,
His crime accomplish'd, and my shame confirm'd.
Why should you wait? He offers you his life;
No guards attend him to this festival,
He makes them all encircle Hector's son,
And gives himself to my avenger's arm.
Will you then of his life take greater care
Than he does? Arm my followers, with your Greeks;
Stir up your friends; on mine you may rely.
Me he betrays, fools you, and scorns us all.
Surely their hatred is as great as mine,
The Trojan woman's husband loath to spare.
Speak, and my foe cannot escape your hands,
Or rather they will strike him dead themselves.
Lead or be led by this their noble rage;
Dyed with the faithless wretch's blood. return;
Thus only can you gain my heart. Now go.

ORESTES.

But, Madam, think—

HERMIONE.

This really passes bounds,
Your scruples grate upon my angry mood.
I show the way to win Hermione,
And make Orestes happy ; but I see
He will do no't to earn her, only whine
For ever. Go ; boast of your constancy
Elsewhere, and leave me to avenge myself.
My weak concessions fill my soul with shame,
One day of such refusals is too much.
When all is ready for the marriage rite,
And where you dare not venture, I will go
Alone, find means t' approach my enemy,
And stab the heart I could not touch with love
Then shall my blood-stain'd hands, turn'd on myself,
Unite our destiny in spite of him :
And, traitor tho' he be, 'twill be more sweet
For me to die with him than live with you.

ORESTES.

No, I will rob you of that dismal joy ;
He shall not die but by Orestes' hand.
Yes, by my arm your enemies shall fall,
And you shall then reward me, if you will.

HERMIONE.

Go. Leave your future fortune in my care
Let all your ships be ready for our flight.

Scene 4.

HERMIONE, CLEONE.

CLEONE.

Think, Madam, ere your ruin you invoke—

HERMIONE.

Ruin or no, I mean to have revenge.
I doubt, whatever promises be made,
The trust reposed on others than myself :
The guilt of Pyrrhus does not scorch his eyes
As it does mine ; my stroke would be more sure.
To be my own avenger would be sweet,
To stain this fair arm with the traitor's blood,
And, to increase my pleasure and his pain,
To hide my rival from his dying gaze !
What if Orestes fail to let him know
He dies a victim sacrificed to me !
Go, find and tell him to inform the wretch
He owes his death to me, and not to Greece.
Run, dear Cleone, my revenge is balk'd,
If he should die unconscious that his doom
Proceeds from me.

CLEONE.

I will obey you.—Ah !
What do I see ? Who would have fancied it ?
The King himself !

HERMIONE.

Follow Orestes straight,
He must do nought till he sees me again !

Scene 5.

PYRRHUS, HERMIONE, PHENIX.

PYRRHUS.

You are surprised that I should seek you here,
And my approach disturbs your colloquy.
I do not come arm'd with unworthy wiles,
No feign'd excuse shall gloss the wrong I do :
My heart condemns me with no doubtful voice,
Nor can I urge a plea I know is false.
I wed a Trojan woman. Yes, I own
The faith I plight to her was giv'n to you.

I might remind you that our fathers form'd
These ties at Troy without consulting us,
And we were bound together by no love
Or choice of ours; but 'tis enough for me
That I submitted. My ambassadors
Made you the promise of my heart and hand;
So far from wishing to revoke the pledge,
I willingly confirm'd it; you, with them,
Came hither, and, altho' another eye
Already had subdued me and forestall'd
Your sway, that passion did not make me pause,
And I resolved still to be true to you.
I welcomed you as queen, and, till this day,
I thought my oath would hold the place of love.
But love prevail'd, and, by a fatal stroke,
Andromache has won the heart she hates:
Each drawn by th' other in our own despite,
We hasten to the altar, there to swear
Union for ever. Blame me as you may
For traitor, tho' a willing one I grieve
To prove defaulter; nor do I presume
To check the just resentment that relieves
Myself as much as you. Call me forsworn,
I fear your silence more than your reproach;
Wrung by the secret witness in my heart,
The less you say the more I feel my guilt.

HERMIONE.

Sir, this confession, stripp'd of all deceit,
Shows that at least you to yourself are just;
And, tho' resolved to snap this solemn tie,
Crime makes you in your own eyes criminal.
Yet, after all, why should a conqueror stoop
To common honesty that keeps its word?
No, perfidy for you has secret charms;
You seek me but to glory in your shame;
Unhinder'd by your duty or your oath,
A maid of Greece and then a dame of Troy
Attract your fickle fancy, flying off,
Returning, and then leaving me once more;
Crowning in turn the princess and the slave,

Making Troy bow to Greece, and Greece to Troy !
Thus acts a heart that's master of itself,
Heroic, and no slave of promises !
Your bride might be displeased were I to stint
Such honey'd terms as wretch and perjurer.
You came to look whether my face were pale,
And then to mock my sorrow in her arms.
You would be glad if I would follow her
In tears ; but one day has brought joy enough.
You need not seek new titles to renown,
Those that you have may well suffice your greed,
The aged sire of Hector smitten down
Dying before the eyes of all his kin,
While your sword, thrust into his feeble heart,
Seeks the few frozen drops that linger there ;
Troy all in flames, plunged in a sea of blood ;
Your hand too cut Polyxena's fair throat,
A cruel sight that Greece herself condemn'd.
Such glorious deeds claim fit acknowledgment.

PYRRHUS.

I know full well to what excess of rage
Revenge for Helen's rape transported me :
To you, her child, I might impute the blood
That I have shed ; but be the past forgot.
I thank high Heaven that your indifference
Sanctions a happier passion in my breast.
My heart, too ready to torment itself,
Should know you better, and excuse its change.
Madam, I did you wrong to feel remorse ;
Can one be faithless who was never loved ?
You have not tried to keep me bound to you :
Fearing to injure, it may be that I
Serve you. No sympathy unites our hearts ;
'Twas duty that I follow'd, as did you :
You never loved me in reality.

HERMIONE.

I never loved you ! What then did I do ?
For you our native princes I despised,

Sought you myself in your remotest realms ;
Still am I here, tho' you have proved untrue,
And all my Greeks my weakness view with shame.
I have commanded them to hide my wrongs ;
In secret I awaited your return
To duty ; trusting, whether soon or late,
You would bring back a heart I claim'd as mine.
I loved you tho' inconstant ; could I more
If faithful found ? E'en while your cruel lips
Calmly announce the death of all my hopes,
I doubt if I have ceased to love you yet.
But if it must be so, and Heav'n in wrath
Reserves for other eyes the pow'r to charm,
Complete this marriage ; but at least refrain
From forcing me to witness my disgrace.
Listen, for this may be my last appeal ;
Let one day pass, to-morrow you shall wed—
You answer nought ? Ah, faithless wretch, 'tis clear
You count those moments lost you spend with me !
Impatient your enchantress to behold
Once more, you grudge with others to converse :
With her your heart inspires each word, each look.
Escape where you are free, I hold you not
From going ; swear as you have sworn to me.
Go, and profane the majesty of Heav'n,
The justice of the gods, who'll ne'er forget
How those same oaths have bound you to myself.
Haste, to their altars take that perjured heart ;
There dread to meet Hermione once more.

Scene 6.

PYRRHUS, PHENIX.

PHENIX.

My lord, you heard her : be upon your guard,
Beware the vengeance of a baffled love
Inflamed to fury, arm'd with the support

Of Greece that is the champion of her cause :
Orestes loves her still, perchance that prize—

PYRRHUS.

Andromache awaits me. Guard her son !

ACT V.

Scene 1.

HERMIONE.

Where am I ? and what is it I have done ?
What yet remains ? What rage possesses me ?
How thro' these halls I roam irresolute,
Devour'd with grief, and know not if I love
Or hate ! His eye at parting seem'd to freeze
My soul, nor did he ever feign to pity ;
No, not a moment's tenderness or sorrow ;
His heart refused to grant a single groan.
Deaf to my sighs, 'mid all my anguish calm,
My tears awoke no sympathy in him.
And yet I mourn his loss ! And for a crown
Of sorrow, still this weak heart throbs for him.
I tremble at the blow so soon to fall,
Forget revenge, and almost pardon him !
But no, my sentence shall not be revoked :
Perish the traitor, since he's dead to me !
Triumphantly he laughs my wrath to scorn,
And thinks this tempest will dissolve in tears,
That, always feeble and irresolute,
With one hand I'll ward off the other's blows :
Past kindness makes him deem it measureless.
But other thoughts, rather, his mind engross :
The traitor in his triumph little cares
Whether the absent wish him life or death,
And leaves to me this dire perplexity.
One stroke shall end it ; at Orestes' hand

He meets the death he ought to have foreseen,
Which he himself has forced me to desire.
What! Is it I then who pronounce his doom?
And must he die because Hermione
Has loved him? He whose oft repeated deeds
Gave ever fresh delight when heard again,
To whom in secret I had link'd my lot
Ere to the fatal contract we were bound.
Have I then cross'd so many lands and seas,
And come so far, only to dig his grave,
To be his murderer? Ah, ere he dies—

Scene 2.

HERMIONE, CLEONE.

HERMIONE.

What have I done, Cleone? Have you aught
To tell me? Where is Pyrrhus?

CLEONE.

At the height
Of love and happiness; proudest of men,
I saw him to the temple lead his bride,
His latest conquest: in his eye there shone
The light of joy and hope. Gazing on her,
He seem'd to drink intoxicating draughts.
Andromache, 'midst all the glad acclaim,
Bore in her heart sad memories of Troy;
Incapable alike of love and hate,
Submissive, she nor murmur'd nor rejoiced.

HERMIONE.

And Pyrrhus? Carried he his bold affront
To th' end? Observed you well his countenance?
Seem'd he to taste calm pleasure unalloy'd?
Did he not hither cast a single look?
Tell me, Cleone, did you meet his eye?

I.

N

And did he blush when he perceived you there?
Show'd he with troubled brow a sense of guilt,
Or did his pride support him to the last?

CLEONE.

He noticed nothing ; and his safety seem'd.
With honour's voice, forgotten like yourself.
Heedless of those who follow, friends or foes,
He hastens onward to Love's wish'd for goal.
Round Hector's son he has bestow'd his guards,
And fancies danger threatens him alone.
Phoenix has him in charge, who to a fort
Far from the temple and the palace brings
The child, whose safety seems the only care
That Pyrrhus knows.

HERMIONE.

Orestes? The wretch shall die! What said

CLEONE.

He has enter'd with his men
The temple.

HERMIONE.

My wrongs ? **Is he ready to avenge**

CLEONE.

I know not.

HERMIONE.

Orestes too prove false? What, you know not! Will

CLEONE.

He worships you ;
But with a thousand scruples of remorse
Contending, now to Honour he gives heed,
And now to Love. In Pyrrhus he respects
The throne, Achilles, and Achilles' son.

He fears the wrath of Greece and all the world ;
But more than all, he said, he fears himself.
As victor he would bring the traitor's head,
But not as an assassin, odious name !
At last he enter'd, knowing not if thence
He should go forth blood guilty, or a mere
Spectator.

HERMIONE. •

No, their triumph he will watch
Without the wish to strike a jarring note.
I know what scruples make his courage blench ;
The coward fears to die, and fears nought else.
My mother stoop'd not to a single prayer,
Yet in her cause all Greece rose up in arms.
Her eyes, thro' ten years' war, saw twenty kings,
Whose names she scarcely knew, die for their sake :
While I but ask death to a perjurer,
Charging a lover to avenge my wrongs,
And so to win me at no risk to him ;
I give myself, and yet I am refused !
Go to, my own arm must for justice strike.
Let cries of pain thro' all the temple ring ;
Their fatal bridal shall in bloodshed end,
And but one moment see them man and wife.
Nor shall my fury halt to choose its prey,
Orestes shall as Pyrrhus be to me ;
And if by death I purchase my revenge,
I'll gladly die in such good company.

Scene 3.

ORESTES, HERMIONE, CLEONE.

ORESTES.

Madam, 'tis over, and your will is done ;
Yes, at the altar now the traitor yields
His life.

HERMIONE.

Is Pyrrhus dead ?

ORESTES

He breathes his last,
 Our Greeks have blotted out his guilt in blood.
 I gave my promise, tho' this plot to me
 Appear'd too horrible. With hasty steps
 I sought the temple, when I found our men
 Had to the very altar crept unseen
 Amid the crowd. With countenance unchanged,
 Pyrrhus perceived me, and his courage seem'd
 Warm'd at the sight; Greece, in my person braved,
 Lending fresh glory to his nuptial rites.
 Proudly he raised on high the diadem,
 And placed it on the Trojan woman's brow
 With his own hand, saying: "I give to you
 My crown, and plight my troth; reign o'er my realms
 And o'er myself; your son shall find in me
 A father's love; may Heav'n confirm the vow
 I make to you his mother, and his foes
 Be mine. I hail him as the King of Troy."
 Applause resounded as he spake these words,
 Answer'd by cries of wrath from Grecian throats.
 They throng'd around the traitor where he stood,
 So that I found no place to strike, for each
 Vied with his neighbour who should lay him low.
 Cover'd with blood, vainly he sought escape
 From countless blows, and at the altar fell.
 Thence passing thro' the terror-stricken crowds,
 I came, to bring my princess to the port.
 There will our friends, their hands with slaughter red,
 Be with us soon. My promise is fulfill'd.

HERMIONE.

What have they done?

ORESTES.

If their excess of zeal
 Has marr'd your vengeance, pardon them for that.
 You would have had me be the first to strike,
 That he might feel it was for you he died;
 But 'twas my ardour prompted them to act;

For your sake, and yours only, were they brought
Within the temple; you may justly claim
As sacrificed to you the life they took,
As agents of the vengeance you had plann'd.

HERMIONE.

Traitor, be silent, nor impute to me
The crime which brands you coward. Let the Greeks
Applaud the impious act. Go; I disown
Your cruelty and you, who have destroy'd
The noblest of mankind this fatal day.
Did no compunction visit your fell hearts
To check such slaughter? Who made you the judge
To sentence him to death? What was his crime?
What right had you to slay him? Tell me that!
Who bade you do it?

ORESTES.

Heav'ns! It was you yourself,
Just now, upon this spot, the order gave.

HERMIONE.

You should have paid no heed to love bereft
Of reason, but have read my deeper thoughts.
Saw you not while I raved distractedly,
My heart belied whatever words I spoke?
E'en had I meant them, you should have refused,
A hundred times repeated, such a wish:
Ask'd me again before the blow was struck,
And then return'd, or rather shunn'd my sight.
You should have let me wreak my own revenge.
What lured you hither, hateful to mine eyes?
Behold what bitter fruit your love has borne!
You bring me all the ills that follow you:
Your embassy it was, fatal to both,
That to my rival made his thoughts incline,
He might have else admitted me to share
His heart again, or feign'd at least to love.
Go you, in this Epirus I will stay.

Greece and my Spartan home I here renounce,
Yea, all my family; enough for me
That they have bred a monster like yourself!

Scene 4.

ORESTES.

Was that Hermione I saw and heard?
She for whom flow'd the blood that I have shed?
Did she not call me traitor, murderer?
Am I Orestes? And is Pyrrhus slain?
Was reason's light extinguish'd in my heart
That I should kill a king whom I revere,
In one day violate a sovereign's rights,
An envoy's office, and all human ties,
Profane the altars where he stood at bay,
And turn a sacrilegious regicide?
And all for one who knows no gratitude,
Who made me vow to slay him, or she ne'er
Would see me more. When I have done the task
Her fury set, she taunts me with his blood!
She loves him! As a monster looks on me!
Far from mine eyes for ever she withdraws,
And in her thankless flight leaves me for hire
Names of reproach, incurr'd to please her rage!

Scene 5.

ORESTES, PYLADES, SOLDIERS OF ORESTES

PYLADES.

We must depart, and leave this palace, Sir;
Or be content never to leave at all.
Our Greeks defend the gate one moment more,
Ere our pursuers' forces grow too strong.
All here obey Andromache's commands,

They treat her as their queen, and us as foes :
And she herself, stubborn while Pyrrhus lived,
All duties of a faithful widow pays,
And urges vengeance, haply all the more
That Hector's shade too claims the blood of Greece.
Let us not wait, then, till they hem us round ;
Our men will join us, and, while all the crowd
Still gaze and gape upon Hermione,
We may pass thro' in safety. Come this way.

ORESTES.

No, friends ; it is Hermione I fain
Would follow, her last sentence can I not
Survive. Go ; let me expiate my crime.

PYLADES.

Hermione ! Forget her. Would you still,
The instrument and object of her rage,
Invite fresh insult e'en among the dead ?
And, because she dies, must you perish too ?

ORESTES.

She dies ! Ye gods, what is it that I hear ?

PYLADES.

Did you not know ? We met her, as we came ;
With hurrying feet, and frenzy in her eyes,
She sought the temple, and found Pyrrhus borne
By soldiers whom his blood to vengeance roused :
Doubtless that sight stirr'd madness too in her.
We saw her, as we stood above the gate,
O'er Pyrrhus bending low, dagger in hand ;
Then, eyes uplifting, plunge it in her breast,
And fall.

ORESTES.

Ah, Heav'n has been pleased t' inflict
Woes worse than I had look'd for ! Never turn'd
One moment from relentless punishment,
The gods have made my agony supreme,

And found delight devising miseries,
That I might serve as an example meet
Of wrath celestial, born to wretchedness.
Well, I have drain'd the cup, and die content.
Where are the lovers? To complete my joy,
Let me be drown'd in blood, their own and mine.
Let me behold them as they both expire
And three hearts be united, that were long
Discordant—

But what thickness of black night
Enshrouds me suddenly! What horror thrills
Thro' all my frame, with no way of escape!
Thank heav'n! I see a glimmering light. 'Tis blood,
Streams of red blood all round me!

PYLADES.

Ah, my lord!

ORESTES.

What, Pyrrhus! Must I meet thee everywhere?
How has my hated rival 'scaped his wounds?
Hold, I have yet a stroke reserved for thee.
But what is this? Hermione, with arms
Encircling, tears him from the threaten'd blow!
Ye gods! What frightful looks she casts on me!
Serpents and fiendish faces dog her steps.
Why are your hands outstretch'd, Furies of Hell?
Whom do these snakes, that hiss above your heads,
Threaten to sting? What means this horrid train?
Come ye to bear me to eternal night?
So be it, to your rage Orestes yields.
But no, leave vengeance to Hermione;
'Twere better that she tear me limb from limb,
Yea, and devour the heart I offer her! ,

PYLADES.

Friends, he has lost his senses. While there's time,
Let's take advantage of this fit, and save
The prince. Our efforts will be vain if once
His madness here with consciousness return.

THE LITIGANTS.
A COMEDY.

INTRODUCTION TO THE LITIGANTS.

THIS play, which is neither a comedy nor a farce but has elements in common with each, was first performed in 1668 at Paris, and afterwards at Versailles. Its humour in a great measure depends upon the mock gravity which masks its ridiculous features; the language and style are those of comedy, while the tone of exaggeration and the absurdity of the situations belong more fitly to burlesque. It is a French adaptation of "The Wasps" of Aristophanes, to which the wit of Rabelais and of Furetière (author of the "Roman Bourgeois") have contributed not a little. Racine's own experience of law and lawyers was derived from the suit in which he had been involved about the Priory of Epernay, during the course of which he picked up a number of barbarous terms, "which," to quote his own words, "neither my judges nor I ever properly understood."

"Les Plaideurs," though it fell rather flat at first, has proved to be by far the most popular of all Racine's plays.

CHARACTERS.

DANDIN, *a judge.*

LEANDER, *son of Dandin.*

CHICANEAU, *a citizen.*

ISABELLE, *daughter of Chicaneau.*

A Countess.

PETIT-JEAN, *a house porter.*

L'INTIMÉ, *a clerk.*

A Prompter.

The scene is laid in a town of Lower Normandy.

THE LITIGANTS.

A COMEDY.

ACT I.

Scene 1.

PETIT-JEAN (*hauling along a big bag full of law papers*).

Oh, what a fool is he who trusts the future :
Who laughs at morn will cry before the night.
A judge took me, last year, into his service,—
Fetch'd me from Amiens to be Swiss porter.
These Normans thought to laugh at my expense :
When we're with wolves, one learns to howl, they say.
I played a wily hand, tho' a poor Picard,
And crack'd my whip loudly as any other.
All the fine gentlemen would, hat in hand,
Call me good Mr. Petit-Jean, with flatteries
Long as your arm. But honours without coin
Are naught. I acted like a play-house porter ;
In vain they knock'd, and how'd with heads uncover'd,
Save with the silver key, they might not enter.
No money,—then no Swiss, to unlock the door.
'Tis true my master's pocket took a scantling ;
Sometimes there came a reckoning. 'Twas my charge
To purchase hay, and candles for the house ;
I did not lose by that, at all events ;
I might have bought the straw into the bargain.
His heart was too much in his work, however,—
The more's the pity,—first in court, and last,
Each day, and often quite alone ; believe me,

He'd like to sleep there without sup^o or morsel.
 I'd say at times,—“ Dear Mr. Perrin Dandin,
 Excuse my freedom, you get up too early.
 He who would travel far should spare his steed;
 Drink, eat, and sleep, and make a fire to last.”
 He took no heed. And so well have his vigils
 Repaid him, that they say his brain is crack'd.
 One up, one down, he wants to judge us all.
 He's always mumbling some strange gibberish,
 I know not what, and will, by hook or crook,
 Take with him into bed his wig and gown.
 He had his cock killed, in a fit of rage,
 Because it didn't wake him up in time:
 He said, a suitor, whose affair went ill,
 Had with a bribe corrupted the poor bird.
 Poor man, this sentence did him little good,
 His son all talk of business has tabooed:
 He makes us guard him closely night and day,
 Or else,—good-bye, he's off, and in the court!
 Heav'n knows, he's quick enough to give the slip.
 And I,—no sleep for me, I'm growing thin,
 Wretchedly thin; I stretch my arms and yawn.
 But watch who will, this bag shall be my pillow:
 To-night, i' faith, I'll take my ease for once!
 No one can blame me sleeping in the streets.
 Let's go to sleep.

[*He lies down on the g*

Scene 2.

L'INTIMÉ, PETIT-JEAN.

L'INTIMÉ.

What ho! Friend Petit-Jean!

PETIT-JEAN.

L'Intimé!

(*Aside.*) He's afraid I'm catching cold.

L'INTIMÉ.

My stars! What brings you in the street so early?

PETIT-JEAN.

I'm not a stork, to stand upon one leg,
For ever on the watch, hearing him shout.
What bellows too! I think the man's possess'd.

L'INTIMÉ.

Excellent!

PETIT-JEAN.

When I scratch my head, and tell him
I'd like to go to sleep, he gravely says,—
"Lodge a petition how you wish to sleep."
It makes me sleepy but to talk of it.
Good night.

L'INTIMÉ.

Good night, forsooth! Deuce take it, if—
But hark, I think I hear a noise up there.

Scene 3.

DANDIN, L'INTIMÉ, PETIT-JEAN.

DANDIN (*at the window*).

Petit-Jean! L'Intimé!

L'INTIMÉ (*to PETIT-JEAN*).

Hush!

DANDIN.

I'm alone.

My keepers prove defaulters, Heav'n be prais'd
Give time enough, they'll enter an appearance.
Now for a gaol delivery thro' the window.
Out of the court there!

L'INTIMÉ

Ha! Well jump'd!

PETIT-JEAN.

You're caught, Sir!

DANDIN.

Thieves! Thieves!

PETIT-JEAN.

We've got you now, and won't let go.

L'INTIMÉ.

There's no good bawling.

DANDIN.

Help! They're murdering me!

Scene 4.

LEANDER, DANDIN, L'INTIMÉ, PETIT-JEAN.

LEANDER.

I hear my father in the street. Quick, lights!
Father, what brings you out at such an hour?
Whither away so fast?

DANDIN.

I want to judge.

LEANDER.

Judge whom? The world's asleep.

PETIT-JEAN.

Except myself.

LEANDER.

Why, what a heap of bags! They're all about him.

DANDIN.

It will be quite three months ere I come back,
And these are my provisions,—bags and papers.

LEANDER.

But you'll want food.

DANDIN.

There's a refreshment stall.

LEANDER.

Where will you sleep then, father?

DANDIN.

On the bench.

LEANDER.

No, father; you'd much better stay at home.
Lie in your own bed, eat at your own table.
Listen to reason, and let that persuade you;
And for your health—

DANDIN.

I like to be unwell.

LEANDER.

You're bad enough already. Take some rest:
You'll soon be nothing but mere skin and bones.

DANDIN.

Rest? Would you have me rule myself by you?
Think you a judge has nought to do but pace
The streets like any fop, and make good cheer,
Jambling by day, and dancing all the night?
No, money does not drop into one's hands;
Each of your ribbands costs me an award,
Yet you're ashamed to be a judge's son,
And ape the nobleman. Dandin, my friend,
See the ancestral portraits on my walls,

All of them wearing the judicial robes;
No other line is half so good; compare
A judge's fees with what a marquis gets;
Wait till the year's end, and then count our gains.
A nobleman's no better than a pillar
Inside my hall! The smartest swell among them
Will stand there blowing on his frozen fingers,
His nose close muffled, or a hand thrust down
Into his pocket; and to warm himself
He'll turn my spit. That's how they fare. Poor boy,
Your angel mother never taught you so.
My Babonnette, I weep to think of her,
How not a single sitting she would miss,
How all her life she never left my side,
And took away full often Heav'n knows what:
She would have rather pocketed the napkins
The waiter brought, than gone home empty-handed,
That's how to raise a family! Begone;
You're nothing but a fool.

LEANDER.

You'll soon catch cold
If you stand there. Take him back, Petit-Jean,
Put him to bed, shut every door and window,
Making all fast, and keep your master warm.

PETIT-JEAN.

You must have stronger railings fix'd up there.

DANDIN.

What! go to bed thus without legal forms!
First get an order sign'd how I'm to sleep.

LEANDER.

Lie down at least, pending proceedings, father.

DANDIN.

I'll go; but mark me, to enrage you all
I will not sleep a wink.

LEANDER.

 All well and good !
Don't let him be alone. Stay, L'Intimé.

Scene 5.

LEANDER, L'INTIMÉ.

LEANDER.

I wish to have some words with you in private.

L'INTIMÉ.

You'll need a keeper next.

LEANDER.

 I need one now.
Alas, I'm quite as crazy as my father.

L'INTIMÉ.

You want to judge ?

LEANDER.

(Pointing to Isabelle's dwelling.)

 Enough of mystery !
You know that house there.

L'INTIMÉ.

Now I understand you.

'Tis early in the day to go a-courting.
You want me to discuss Miss Isabelle;
I've told you often she's discreet and pretty ;
But then consider Chicaneau, her father,
Consumes in lawsuits well-nigh all her fortune.
He sues each man he meets. I think he'll bring
All France before the bar ere he has done.
He's taken lodgings next door to his judge,

One would be always pleading, and the other
Still on the bench ; nor will your case be settled
Till he has sued you all, priest, lawyer, bridegroom

LEANPER.

I know't as well as you; in spite of all
I die for Isabelle.

L'INTIMÉ.

Well, marry her.
You only have to speak, and it is done.

LEANDER.

Not quite so soon as you imagine. No,
Her father is a Tartar, and I dread him.
Unless you are an usher or attorney,
One may not see his daughter. She, poor girl,
Shut up at home, as in a prison, mourns
While youth is spent in vain regrets, her portion
In lawsuits, and my passion's flame in smoke.
Yes, he will ruin her, if this goes on.
Now don't you know some honest forger fellow
Who'll serve his friend—for a consideration,—
Some zealous bailiff?

L'INTIMÉ.

There are plenty of them!

LEANDER.

Still to be had?

L'INTIMÉ.

Ah, Sir, if my poor father
Were yet alive, he'd be the man to suit you.
He made more in one day, than would another
In six months. On his wrinkled brow were writ
His exploits. He'd have stopp'd a prince's carriage,
And taken him himself. He pocketed
Nineteen of every twenty lashes given
In the whole province. I'm my father's son;
How can I help you?

LEANDER.

You ?

L'INTIMÉ.

Ay, better, maybe,
Than any bailiff.

LEANDER.

Would you serve her father
With a false writ ?

L'INTIMÉ.

H'm.

LEANDER.

Give the girl a letter ?

L'INTIMÉ.

Both in my line. Why not ?

LEANDER.

Hark ! Someone call.
We'll think of this some other time.

Scene 6.

CHICANEAU, PETIT-JEAN.

CHICANEAU (*going away and then coming back*).

La Bric,

Secure the house well, I shall soon return.
Let no one mount the stairs while I'm away.
See that this letter's sent by next mail southward.
Go and choose three fine rabbits from the hutches,
And take them this forenoon to my attorney.
If his clerk comes, give him a glass of wine,
And let him have that bag beside my window.
I wonder if that's all. Oh ! should there call

A tall, thin man,—you know him, serves as witness
And swears for me at need—asking to see me,
Tell him to wait. The judge I fear's gone out,
It's nearly four. But I will knock.

PETIT-JEAN (*half-opening the door*).

Who's there?

CHICANEAU.

I wish to see your master.

PETIT-JEAN (*shutting the door*).

Not at home.

CHICANEAU (*knocking at the door*).

His secretary, can I speak a word to him?

PETIT-JEAN (*shutting the door*).

No.

CHICANEAU (*knocking again*).

Well, his porter?

PETIT-JEAN.

I am he.

CHICANEAU.

Pray drink

My health, Sir.

PETIT-JEAN (*taking money*).

Much good may it do you!

(*shutting the door*).
Return to-morrow.

But

CHICANEAU.

Give me back my money.

In truth the world is getting sadly wicked.
I've known the time when lawsuits gave no trouble!
Six crowns well spent would win me half-a-dozen.
It seems to me my whole estate to-day

Would hardly be enough to bribe a porter.
But I perceive the Countess of Pimblesche
Approaches, surely on some pressing business.

Scene 7.

THE COUNTESS, CHICANEAU.

CHICANEAU.

There's no admittance, Ma'am.

THE COUNTESS.

Didn't I say so?

I' faith my lackeys make me lose my senses.
Scold as I will, they won't get up for me;
And all the household sleeps till I awake it.

CHICANEAU.

He must have told his servant to deny him.

THE COUNTESS.

I've tried to get a word with him these two days,
But all in vain.

CHICANEAU.

My adversary's strong,
And makes me fear.

THE COUNTESS.

After *my* treatment, *you*, Sir,
Must not complain.

CHICANEAU.

Right's on my side, however.

THE COUNTESS.

Ah! what injustice!

CHICANEAU.

I appeal to you, Ma'am.

THE COUNTESS.

Sir, you should know the shameful treachery—

CHICANEAU.

A trivial cause at bottom—

THE COUNTESS.

Let me tell you—

CHICANEAU.

The facts are these. Some twenty years ago
A certain donkey cross'd a field of mine,
Roll'd in the grass, and did a lot of damage;
Against him then I lodged an information,
Had him arrested, and an arbitrator
Named. At two trusses he assess'd the damage
Done to the hay. A year pass'd by, and then
I found myself non-suited, and appeal'd.
They sued upon the judgment, till the case
Came on for hearing.—Madam, mark this well—
Drolichon—let me tell you he's no fool,—
Gets, at some cost, a judgment on request.
And so I gain my case. What happens then?
The trickster on his side stops execution.
Meanwhile another incident occurs;
Defendant's fowl invades the self-same meadow,—
Order of Court to draw up a report
Of how much hay a hen can eat a day,—
Added to previous case. Things being thus
"In statu quo," the hearing is referr'd
To April eighth or ninth, year fifty-six.
I take fresh action, furnish and procure
Pleas, declarations, arguments, and warrants,
Experts' reports, injunctions, writs of error,
Statements of grievance, and fresh evidence,
With affidavits, royal letters patent,

And confutations. Then a dozen rules,
And writs are issued; we produce new proofs,
And replications follow. Judgment giv'n,—
I lose my case with costs—three hundred pounds
To pay! Is that the justice of the law?
And after twenty years! I've one resource left;
The Court of Chancery is open to me.
I won't give in. But you, as I perceive,
Have a suit pending? •

THE COUNTESS.

Would to Heav'n I had!

CHICANEAU.

I'll burn my boats!

THE COUNTESS.

I—

CHICANEAU.

Pay three hundred pounds!
All for a truss or two of hay!

THE COUNTESS.

My lawsuits
Have all been stopp'd, tho' there were only left
Four or five little ones—against my husband,
My father, and my children. Oh! the pity of it! •
They spared no dirty trick that could be thought of.
Or was that all; they've got a judge's order
By which I am restrain'd,—my food and clothing
Provided me,—from going to law again.

CHICANEAU.

Am going to law?

THE COUNTESS.

Yes, Sir, from going to law.

CHICANEAU.

It's monstrous!

THE COUNTESS.

Sir, I'm driven to despair.

CHICANEAU.

To tie the hands of such a noble lady !
But the allowance, Madam, is it large ?

THE COUNTESS.

'Twould keep me very comfortably, Sir.,
But life is worthless without going to law.

CHICANEAU.

Shall knaves then eat us up, body and soul,
And we say nothing ? Tell me, please, how long
It is since you began.

THE COUNTESS.

I can't remember,
'Tis thirty years or more.

CHICANEAU.

That's not so long.

THE COUNTESS.

Alas !

CHICANEAU.

'And what may be your age ? Your looks
Seem young.

THE COUNTESS.

Some sixty years.

CHICANEAU.

Just the right age
To plead in courts.

THE COUNTESS.

Let them go on ! They'll find
They have not seen the end of me. I'll sell
The last stitch off my back sooner than yield.

CHICANEAU.

Listen ! I'll tell you what you ought to do.

THE COUNTESS.

I trust you, Sir, as if you were my father.

CHICANEAU.

I'd have you see my judge,—

THE COUNTESS.

Yes, Sir, I'll go.

CHICANEAU.

Cast yourself at his feet,—

THE COUNTESS.

Yes, there I'll fall,

I'm quite resolved.

CHICANEAU.

Be kind enough to hear me.

THE COUNTESS.

Yes, yes, you comprehend my situation.

CHICANEAU.

Have you done, Madam ?

THE COUNTESS.

Yes.

CHICANEAU.

Then seek my judge,

And without ceremony—

THE COUNTESS.

Ah, how good

You are !

CHICANEAU.

If still you speak, I must be silent.

THE COUNTESS.

You overpower me with gratitude.

CHICANEAU.

Get access to my judge, and say—

THE COUNTESS.

Yes.

CHICANEAU.

You are again! Say to him: Sir—

There

THE COUNTESS.

Yes, Sir.

CHICANEAU.

Tie me—

THE COUNTESS.

I won't be tied.

CHICANEAU.

What stuff and nonsense!

THE COUNTESS.

I say I won't.

CHICANEAU.

You have strange fancies, Madam.

THE COUNTESS.

No, never.

CHICANEAU.

Wait till you have heard me out.

O

THE COUNTESS.

I'll go to law, or know the reason why.

CHICANEAU.

But—

THE COUNTESS.

But I'll never let them tie me, Sir—

CHICANEAU.

When once a woman's head has got a craze—

THE COUNTESS.

Crazy yourself!

CHICANEAU.

Madam!

THE COUNTESS.

Tie me, indeed!

CHICANEAU.

Madam!

THE COUNTESS.

The fellow grows impertinent.

CHICANEAU.

But, Madam,—

THE COUNTESS.

Rascal, with his dirty tricks,
Advising me!

CHICANEAU.

Madam!

THE COUNTESS.

With all his talk
About a donkey! Go, and watch your hay.

CHICANEAU.

This is too much !

THE COUNTESS.

Fool !

CHICANEAU.

Oh, for witnesses !

Scene 8.

PETIT-JEAN, THE COUNTESS, CHICANEAU.

PETIT-JEAN.

A pretty row they're making at our door !
Go, and raise storms of this sort farther off.

CHICANEAU.

Be witness, Sir—

THE COUNTESS.

This gentleman's a fool.

CHICANEAU.

You hear her ; pray remember that expression.

PETIT-JEAN (*to the Countess*).

You oughtn't to say that.

THE COUNTESS.

He's a fine fellow

To call me crazy !

PETIT-JEAN.

Crazy ! That was wrong.

Why do you call her names ?

CHICANEAU.

'Twas good advice.

That I was giving her.

PETIT-JEAN.

Oh, indeed!

THE COUNTESS.

That I

Should get tied up!

PETIT-JEAN.

Fie, Sir!

CHICANEAU.

She would not hear

All that I had to say.

PETIT-JEAN.

Fie, Ma'am!

THE COUNTESS.

Am I

To be abused by him?

CHICANEAU.

A scold!

PETIT-JEAN.

Peace

THE COUNTESS.

Villain!

CHICANEAU.

Who dares not go to law!

THE COUNTESS.

What's that to you?

Abominable swindler, meddler, thief!

PETIT-JEAN.

Stop, stop!

CHICANEAU.

Why that beats all! Ten thousand devils!
Bailiffs! police!

THE COUNTESS.

Oh, for a constable!

PETIT-JEAN.

They must be all tied up, plaintiffs and judge.

ACT II.

Scene 1.

LEANDER, L'INTIMÉ.

L'INTIMÉ.

I can't do everything; there's one stroke more
Needed; and you must play the magistrate,
If I'm the officer. If you'll but don
A gown and follow in my steps, you'll find
Means to hold converse. Change that auburn wig.
These people do not know of your existence,
And when they come to wait upon your father,
Day will have scarcely dawn'd. You've cause to praise
That precious Countess whom my lucky star
Brought just when she was wanted. Seeing me,
She fell into the trap, and bade me serve
A writ on Chicaneau, and summon him
Before the Court for certain words of his,
Whereby he wish'd to make her pass for mad,
Too mad to be at large, with other insults
Such as are wont to garnish writs of slander.
But you say nothing of my fine get up.
Don't I look like a sheriff's officer?

LEANDER.

Ay, that you do!

L'INTIMÉ.

I can't think how it is,
I feel I'm twenty times the man I was.
Well, here's the writ, and here, Sir, is your letter
Miss Isabelle shall have it, that I promise.
But if you'd have this marriage contract sign'd,
You must present yourself without delay.
Pretend to make inquiries on the matter,
While making love under her father's nose.

LEANDER.

Don't let the writ change places with the letter

L'INTIMÉ.

No. He shall have the writ, and she the "billet"
Go in.

(L'INTIMÉ goes and knocks at ISABELLE's door)

Scene 2.

ISABELLE, L'INTIMÉ.

ISABELLE.

Who knocks?

L'INTIMÉ.

A friend.

(Aside.) The voice is hers,

'Tis Isabelle.

ISABELLE.

Who is it, Sir, you want?

L'INTIMÉ.

I have a little writ here; grant me, please,
The honour, Miss, of serving it on you.

I.

P.

ISABELLE.

Excuse me, Sir, I cannot understand it ;
My father will be here soon ; speak to him.

L'INTIMÉ.

Is he not then within, Miss ?

ISABELLE.

No, he's not.

L'INTIMÉ.

The warrant, Miss, is made out in your name.

ISABELLE.

You, doubtless, take me, Sir, for someone else.
I never went to law, but know its cost ;
And if the world loved it no more than I do,
You and your like would need some new employment.
Farewell.

L'INTIMÉ.

But, pray, allow—

ISABELLE.

I'll allow nothing.

L'INTIMÉ.

This is no writ.

ISABELLE.

Nonsense !

L'INTIMÉ.

It is a letter.

ISABELLE.

That's worse.

L'INTIMÉ.

But read it.

ISABELLE.

No, you shall not catch me.

L'INTIMÉ.

The gentleman who wrote it was—

ISABELLE.

Farewell, Sir.

L'INTIMÉ.

Leander.

ISABELLE.

Not so loud. Who, did you say?

L'INTIMÉ.

It's hard to make her listen; faith, I'm now
Quite out of breath.

ISABELLE.

Oh, pardon my surprise;

L'Intimé, give it.

L'INTIMÉ.

You'd have slamm'd the door

Right in my face.

ISABELLE.

Who would have known 'twas you
In this disguise? Give it.

L'INTIMÉ.

I like politeness.

ISABELLE.

Please, give it.

L'INTIMÉ.

What a plague!

ISABELLE.

Go, take your letter with you. Don't give it then.

L'INTIMÉ.

You shall have it.
But next time don't you be in such a hurry.

Scene 3.

CHICANEAU, ISABELLE, L'INTIMÉ.

CHICANEAU.

Yes, yes; she call'd me fool and thief. I've charged
A sheriff's officer to take my thanks,
And I'll soon serve her with a dainty dish.
I should be vex'd were I obliged to send
A second time, or if she she sued me first.
But who is this man talking to my daughter?
She reads a letter: it must be a lover's.
I will go near.

ISABELLE.

Is he sincere? Shall I believe your master?

L'INTIMÉ.

He cannot sleep o' nights,
No more than your papa; he'll—
(*perceiving* CHICANEAU.)

Make you see
How those gain nought who go to law with him.

ISABELLE (*perceiving* CHICANEAU).

My father !

(To L'INTIMÉ.)

You may tell them, if they sue,
I can defend myself.

(Tearing the letter.)

Stay, look you, thus
I treat the writ you bring me.

CHICANEAU.

What is this?

It was a writ that she was reading then.
She'll yet do credit to her family,
And hold her own! Come to my arms, my child!
I'll buy you "The Complete Guide to the Law."
But—hang it all—writs shouldn't be torn up.

ISABELLE (to L'INTIMÉ).

I fear them not, and you may say as much:
Ay, let them do their worst: it won't displease me.

CHICANEAU.

Don't vex yourself, my dear.

ISABELLE (to L'INTIMÉ).

Good day, Sir.

Scene 4.

CHICANEAU, L'INTIMÉ.

L'INTIMÉ (*preparing to write*).

Now then,

I must draw up a statement.

CHICANEAU.

Sir, excuse her:

She's ignorant; and I can piece together
These fragments, if you'll kindly wait a moment.

L'INTIMÉ.

No.

CHICANEAU.

I shall soon decipher it.

L'INTIMÉ.

I'll help you,

I've got another copy.

CHICANEAU.

Most obliging,
I'm sure! Somehow, the more I look at you
The less I'm able to recall your face,
Tho' I know heaps of bailiffs.

L'INTIMÉ.

Make inquiries.
I'm not a bad hand at my little jobs.

CHICANEAU.

May be. Who sent you?

L'INTIMÉ.

A distinguish'd lady,
Who much esteems you, and with all her heart
Desires you to come, at my request,
And say one word by way of reparation.

CHICANEAU.

Of reparation? I have injured no one.

L'INTIMÉ.

I well believe it, Sir; you are too good.

CHICANEAU.

What do you want then?

L'INTIMÉ.

She would have you, Sir,
Do her the honour, before witnesses,
Of owning her possess'd of sound good sense.

CHICANEAU.

Good gracious! 'Tis my Countess!

L'INTIMÉ.

At your service!

CHICANEAU.

Give her my best respects.

L'INTIMÉ.

I thank you, Sir.

CHICANEAU.

Yes, pray assure her I have sent a bailiff
To satisfy her claims as she deserves.
What! Is the injured party to be punish'd?
Let's see what song she sings. H'm—"The sixteenth
Of January, for having falsely said,
Prompted by evil motives, that the high
And noble dame, the Countess of Pimbesche,
Ought to be kept in durance as insane,
Be't now declared th' above named Jeremy
Shall straightway to th' aforesaid lady's house
Betake himself, and before witnesses
Not less than four, besides a notary,
In a clear voice acknowledge her sound judgment."
Sign'd, "Good." Is he your sheriff?

L'INTIMÉ.

At your service.

(*Aside.*)

I'll face it out in brazen impudence.

CHICANEAU.

I never saw a writ sign'd "Good" before.
Who's Mr. Good?

L'INTIMÉ.

Sir?

CHICANEAU.

I say you're a rogue.

L'INTIMÉ.

I beg your pardon, I'm an honest man.

CHICANEAU.

The most consummate knave 'tween this and Rome.

L'INTIMÉ.

'Tis not for me to contradict you, Sir :
But you will have to pay for defamation.

CHICANEAU.

Pay? Yes, with blows.

L'INTIMÉ.

You are too gentle, Sir ;
You'll pay me in good coin.

CHICANEAU.

My head will burst
If he goes on. Take that !

L'INTIMÉ.

A box on th' ear !
I'll write it down, "that the said Jeremy,
With other outrages, struck me, a bailiff ;
And thereby knock'd my hat into the mud."

CHICANEAU (*giving him a kick*).

Take that, too !

L'INTIMÉ.

Thanks. As good, as ready money !
I want some badly. "Not content with that,
Follow'd it up by giving me a kick."
Bravo ! "Moreover, the aforesaid Jeremy
Tried, in a rage, to tear this present statement."
Come, my dear Sir, this goes on splendidly.
Don't stop.

CHICANEAU.

You rascal !

L'INTIMÉ.

Do just what you please.
Give me the stick next, if you would oblige me.

CHICANEAU (*holding up a stick*).

Yes, that I will, and see if you're a bailiff.

L'INTIMÉ (*preparing to write*).

Quick, hit me then. I have four hungry children.

CHICANEAU.

Forgive me ! you're a bailiff, sure enough;
But the most clever man may be deceived.
I wrong'd you sadly, but will make amends :
Yes, you're a bailiff, Sir, a thorough bailiff.
Your hand : such men as you have my respect ;
And my late father always brought me up
In the fear of Heav'n, and of bailiffs, Sir.

L'INTIMÉ.

No, you don't beat me on such easy terms.

CHICANEAU.

Don't draw up a complaint, Sir !

L'INTIMÉ.

Words of insult,
A stick raised, ears box'd, and a kick !

CHICANEAU.

Nay, rather
Give them me back, please.

L'INTIMÉ.

They are far too precious ;
I wouldn't part with them for fifty pounds.

Scene 5.

LEANDER (*dressed as a magistrate*), CHICANEAU, L'INTIMÉ.

L'INTIMÉ.

Here comes his Worship, in the nick of time :
Your presence, Sir, is just what we require.
This gentleman has made me a small present,
And giv'n me a tremendous box on th' ear.

LEANDER.

What you, Sir ?

L'INTIMÉ.

Me, I say. *Item*, a kick ;
Besides the names that he bestows on me.

LEANDER.

And have you witnesses ?

L'INTIMÉ.

Put your hand here, Sir :
Feel how my ear and cheek are tingling still.

LEANDER.

Ha ! Taken in the act ! assault and battery !

CHICANEAU.

I'm in a nasty fix !

L'INTIMÉ.

His daughter, too,
At least she said she was, tore up my writ,
Saying she was pleased to get it, and defied us
To do our worst.

LEANDER (*to L'INTIMÉ*).

Then bring the daughter here.
They seem a contumacious family.

CHICANEAU (*aside*).

These people must most surely have bewitch'd me :
May I be hang'd if I know one of them !

LEANDER.

Assault a bailiff ! Here's the little rebel.

Scene 6.

LEANDER, ISABELLE, CHICANEAU, L'INTIMÉ.

L'INTIMÉ (*to ISABELLE*).

D' you recognize him ?

LEANDER.

Well, Miss, so it's you
Who just now treated with supreme contempt
Our officer, and haughtily defied us.
Your name, please.

ISABELLE.

Isabelle.

LEANDER.

So. Write it down.
Your age ?

ISABELLE.

Eighteen.

CHICANEAU.

In fact a little more ;
But that's no matter.

LEANDER.

Say, have you a husband ?

ISABELLE.

No, Sir.

LEANDER.

You're laughing? Write down that she laugh'd.

CHICANEAU.

Don't talk of husbands, Sir, to girls like her;
You've nought to do with family affairs.

LEANDER.

Write that he interrupted.

CHICANEAU.

Nay, I did not
Intend to do so. Isabelle, take care
What you say next.

LEANDER.

Pray don't alarm yourself.
We do not wish to vex you; answer freely.
Did not this bailiff here hand you a paper
Just now?

ISABELLE.

That's right, Sir.

CHICANEAU.

Good, and so he did.

LEANDER.

And did you dare to tear it up unread?

ISABELLE.

I read it, Sir.

CHICANEAU.

Ha! good again.

LEANDER (*to L'INTIMÉ*).

Write on.

(*To ISABELLE.*)

What made you tear it?

ISABELLE.

Sir, I was afraid
My father would take it to heart too much,
And its perusal might inflame his wrath.

CHICANEAU.

And you're the girl so frighten'd at the Law!
Mere mischief.

LEANDER.

So you did not tear the paper
In scorn, or in contempt of those who sent it
To you?

ISABELLE.

I've neither anger nor contempt
For them.

LEANDER (*to L'INTIMÉ*).

Write that down.

CHICANEAU.

She takes after me;
She answers very well.

LEANDER.

You show, however,
An evident contempt for men of law.

ISABELLE.

A lawyer's gown used to offend my eyes,
But that aversion now grows somewhat less.

CHICANEAU.

That's right, my child! You shall be married well,
And at no distant date—if it costs nothing.

LEANDER.

You then consent to meet the claims of justice?

ISABELLE.

Sir, I'll do anything to give you pleasure.

L'INTIMÉ.

Sir, make her sign her name to that.

LEANDER.

Will you
Confirm your promise when occasion serves?

ISABELLE.

You may trust Isabelle to keep her word.

LEANDER.

Sign then. That's well, justice is satisfied.
There now, will you, Sir, add your name?

CHICANEAU.

With pleasure:

I sign, without a look, to all she says.

LEANDER (*aside to ISABELLE*).

All has gone well. Success smiles on my wishes;
He signs a marriage contract in due form,
And his own hand will prove his condemnation.

CHICANEAU (*aside*).

What is he saying to her? Charm'd no doubt
With her good sense.

LEANDER.

Farewell. Be ever wise,
As you are fair. My man, escort her home.
Come, Sir.

CHICANEAU.

Where now?

LEANDER.

Where I shall lead you, Sir.

But where ?

CHICANEAU.

LEANDER.

You'll soon know. In the King's name, come.

CHICANEAU.

What's this ?

Scene 7.

LEANDER, CHICANEAU, PETIT-JEAN.

PETIT-JEAN.

I say, has anybody seen
My master ? Which way went he ? By the door,
Or window ?

LEANDER.

Don't tell me !

PETIT-JEAN.

His son is vanish'd ;
And for the father, deuce knows where he is.
He kept on telling me he wanted "spices ;"
I, like a simpleton, ran to the pantry,
To find the pepper-box ; and he, meanwhile,
Bolted.

Scene 8.

DANDIN (*at a garret window on the roof*), LEANDER,
CHICANEAU, L'INTIMÉ, PETIT-JEAN.

DANDIN.

Peace ! Silence in the Court, I say.

LEANDER.

Good Heavens !

PETIT-JEAN.

Look, he's up there on the gutter.

DANDIN.

Pray, who are you? What is your business, Sirs?
Who are these gownsmen? Are you barristers?
Speak.

PETIT-JEAN.

You will see, he's going to judge the cats.

DANDIN.

If you have not yet seen my secretary,
Ask him if he has told me of your case.

LEANDER.

I must get hold of him, and bring him down.
Keep your eyes, bailiff, on your prisoner.

PETIT-JEAN.

Ho, you Sir!

LEANDER.

Silence, if you love your life,
And follow me.

Scene 9.

THE COUNTESS, DANDIN, CHICANEAU. L'INTIMÉ.

DANDIN.

Quick, what is your petition?

CHICANEAU.

Without your order I have been arrested.

THE COUNTESS.

Good gracious! Is that he among the garrets?
What is he doing there?

L'INTIMÉ.

Hearing petitions.

Now is your chance.

CHICANEAU.

Sir, having been assaulted,
And grievously maltreated, I come here
To make complaint to you.

THE COUNTESS.

As I do also.

CHICANEAU AND THE COUNTESS.

You see before you the offending party.

L'INTIMÉ.

'Faith, I will introduce my grievance too.

THE COUNTESS, CHICANEAU, AND L'INTIMÉ.

Sir, I've a little writ to bring before you.

CHICANEAU.

Let us in turn prefer our several claims.

THE COUNTESS.

His claim, indeed! All that he says is falsehood.

DANDIN.

What wrongs have you sustain'd?

THE COUNTESS, CHICANEAU, AND L'INTIMÉ.

The grossest slanders.

L'INTIMÉ.

And blows, Sir; which is more than they can say.

CHICANEAU.

One of your nephews is my cousin, Sir.

THE COUNTESS.

My case is known to Father Cordon, Sir.

L'INTIMÉ.

Sir, I'm the bastard of your surgeon-barber.

DANDIN.

And what are you?

THE COUNTESS.

A Countess.

L'INTIMÉ.

I'm a bailiff.

CHICANEAU.

And I a burgess.

DANDIN (*retiring from the garret window on the roof*).

Speak, I hear you all.

CHICANEAU.

Sir—

L'INTIMÉ.

Look you there! He has giv'n us the slip.

THE COUNTESS.

Alas!

CHICANEAU.

What's this? Is the Court closed already?
I've not had time to say two words to him.

Scene 10.

LEANDER (*no longer dressed as a magistrate*), CHICANEAU,
THE COUNTESS, L'INTIMÉ.

LEANDER.

Be kind enough to leave us now in peace.

CHICANEAU.

Mayn't I come in, Sir?

LEANDER.

Not while I'm alive.

CHICANEAU.

Why so? I shall not occupy an hour;
Or two, at most.

LEANDER.

There's no admittance, Sir.

THE COUNTESS.

'Tis well to shut the door upon this brawler,
But I—

LEANDER.

You cannot be admitted, Madam.

THE COUNTESS.

Yes, Sir, I will.

LEANDER.

Doubtful.

THE COUNTESS.

I'm sure of it.

LEANDER.

How? Thro' a window?

THE COUNTESS.

Thro' the door.

LEANDER.

We'll see.

CHICANEAU.

If I must do so, I'll stay here till midnight.

Scene 11.

LEANDER, CHICANEAU, THE COUNTESS, L'INTIMÉ,
PETIT-JEAN.

PETIT-JEAN (*to LEANDER*).

No one will hear him now, do what he will.
I've put him in a room close to the cellar.

LEANDER.

One word will do as well as will a hundred,
You cannot see my father.

CHICANEAU.

Oh, indeed!

What if I say I must? And that's the truth.

(DANDIN *shows himself at the air-hole of the cellar.*)
But look, Heav'n sends him to our aid once more!

LEANDER.

Up from the cellar!

PETIT-JEAN.

Surely he's possess'd.

CHICANEAU.

Sir—

DANDIN.

But for you and your impertinence
I should not be in here.

CHICANEAU.

Sir—

DANDIN.

Go away,

Don't bother.

CHICANEAU

'Will you, Sir—

DANDIN.

You split my head.

CHICANEAU.

I've given orders—

DANDIN.

Hold your tongue, I say.

CHICANEAU.

That there be sent you—

DANDIN.

Take him off to prison.

CHICANEAU.

A cask of wine.

DANDIN.

Pshaw! I'll have none of it.

CHICANEAU.

Excellent muscat.

DANDIN.

Please, repeat your case.

LEANDER (*to L'INTIMÉ*).

We must encompass them on all sides.

THE COUNTESS.

Sir,

Nothing but lies is what you'll hear from him.

CHICANEAU.

Sir, 'tis the truth, I say.

DANDIN.

Zoufids, let her speak.

THE COUNTESS.

Pray, hear me, Sir.

DANDIN.

Allow me to take breath.

THE COUNTESS.

Sir—

DANDIN.

I feel suffocated.

THE COUNTESS.

Please, look here.

DANDIN.

She'll be the death of me.

CHICANEAU.

You drag me down!

Take care, I'm falling.

PETIT-JEAN.

Both, upon my word,
Have fallen in the cellar.

LEANDER.

Fly there, quick!
Run to their help. But I intend, at least,
Now Chicaneau's inside, to keep him there
Till morning. L'Intimé, take care of him.

L'INTIMÉ.

The air-hole must be watch'd.

LEANDER.

Go, I'll do that.

Scene 12.

THE COUNTESS, LEANDER.

THE COUNTESS.

The wretch will prepossess him in his favour.

(She speaks through the cellar air-hole.)

Pray, believe nothing that he tells you, Sir;

He is a liar, and has no witnesses.

LEANDER.

What's that you say to them? They may be dying
For aught we know.

THE COUNTESS.

He'll make him swallow all

He chooses. Let me enter.

LEANDER.

No, you shan't.

THE COUNTESS.

I see the muscat wine works upon you,
As much as on your father's inclination.
Patience, I will protest in legal form
Against the judge, also against the cask.

LEANDER.

Go then, and let us have a little peace.
What fools! I never met such company.

Scene 13.

DANDIN, LEANDER, L'INTIMÉ.

L'INTIMÉ.

Where are you running, Sir? You'll hurt yourself,
Limping along like that.

DANDIN.

I want to judge.

LEANDER.

No, father; you must let your wounds be dress'd.
Quick, fetch a surgeon.

DANDIN.

Bring him into Court.

LEANDER.

Stop, father, stop!

DANDIN.

Oh! I can see what's up;
You mean to make of me just what you please,
Casting off filial reverence and regard;
You will not let me judge a single case.
Have done, and take this bag; be quick.

LEANDER.

There, gently.

My father. We must find some compromise.
If judging is your only joy in life,
And you feel bound to sit upon the Bench,
There is no need to leave your house for that;
Fulfil your favorite office here with us.

DANDIN.

Don't ridicule a judge's dignity:
I do not wish to be a dummy, Sir.

LEANDER.

Nay, you shall judge, and that without appeal,
In civil causes as in criminal.
You can hold sittings twice a day, and all
That passes in our midst be brought before you.
A servant brings a dirty glass,—you fine him;
Or if he breaks one, you award a whipping.

DANDIN.

That's something. It deserves consideration.
But who's to pay me for my services?

LEANDER.

Their wages will be your security.

DANDIN.

That's to the point. Your scheme seems feasible.

LEANDER.

And as regards a neighbour—

Scene 14.

DANDIN, LEANDER, L'INTIMÉ, PETIT-JEAN.

PETIT-JEAN.

Stop, there! Catch him!

LEANDER (*to L'INTIMÉ*).

Ah! Have you let my prisoner escape?

L'INTIMÉ.

No fear of that.

PETIT-JEAN.

I am undone—your dog—
Ginger—has just run off with a fat capon,
And eaten it. One can keep nothing from him.

LEANDER.^c

Good, here's a case for him to try. Help! Run!
All join in the pursuit, and catch the thief.

DANDIN.

No noise. Arrest th' offender quietly.

LEANDER.

This household robber must be judged severely,
And made a notable example, father.

DANDIN.

With due formalities I wish th' affair
To be conducted, with opposing counsel;
And there are none.

LEANDER.

Well, we must make some then.
There are your porter and your secretary;
They will prove first-rate advocates, I fancy;
They're very ignorant.

L'INTIMÉ.

Oh, not at all, Sir;
I'll send him fast asleep as well as any.

PETIT-JEAN.

Don't expect much from me, for I know nothing.

LEANDER.^c

This is your first case. We'll prepare it for you.

PETIT-JEAN.

But I can't read.

LEANDER.

Then you shall have a prompter.

DANDIN.

Let's go, and make us ready. We must close
Our eyes to bribes, our ears to all corruption.
You, Master Petit-Jean, are for the plaintiff;
And Master L'Intimé for the defendant.

ACT III.

Scene 1.

LEANDER, CHICANEAU, THE PROMPTER.

CHICANEAU.

Yes, Sir, 'twas thus, I say, they treated me.
I knew not either magistrate or tipstaff.
'Tis true, each word I speak.

LEANDER.

Yes, I believe you;
But were I you, I'd let the matter drop;
You should not drive them to extremities,
Or you will do yourself more harm than them.
You've spent three quarters of your whole estate
Already, Sir, in stuffing lawyers' bags;
And in a vain pursuit that only harms you—

CHICANEAU.

Indeed, you give me excellent advice,
And I intend, ere long, to profit by it.
But, first, I crave your kindly offices.
Since your good father will give audience soon
To suitors, I will fetch my daughter hither;
Let her be question'd, she will speak the truth,
And answer better than myself can do.

LEANDER.

Go then; when you come back, you shall have justice.

THE PROMPTER.

Queer fellow, this!

Scene 2.

LEANDER, THE PROMPTER.

LEANDER.

My scheme's perhaps a strange one;
But my poor father's craze is desperate,
And we must get up something to deceive him.
I have another purpose, too, and wish
This madman, so outrageously litigious,
To lose his suit. But here come all our people.

*Scene 3.*DANDIN, LEANDER, L'INTIMÉ AND PETIT-JEAN (*dressed
as advocates*), THE PROMPTER.

DANDIN.

Pray, who are you?

LEANDER.

These are the advocates.

DANDIN (*to the Prompter*).

And you?

THE PROMPTER.

I come t' assist their memories.

DANDIN.

I see. And you?

LEANDER.

I represent the public.

DANDIN.

Begin then.

THE PROMPTER.

Gentlemen—

PETIT-JEAN.

Don't speak so loud ;
For, if you prompt like that, they can't hear me.
Gentlemen—

DANDIN.

Put your cap on.

PETIT-JEAN.

Oh, my lord—

DANDIN.

Put on your cap, I say.

PETIT-JEAN.

I know my place.

DANDIN.

Don't put it on, then.

PETIT-JEAN (*putting on his cap*).

Gentlemen—

(*To the Prompter.*)

Be quiet ;

I know the first part of my speech all right.
Gentlemen, when I carefully observe
The mutability of mundane matters,
And see amidst the various tribes of men
Not one fix'd star, but many wandering orbs ;
When I behold the Cæsars and their greatness ;
When I behold the sun, and view the moon ;
When I behold the rule of Babybonia¹
Pass from the Serpians² to the Nacedonians ;³
When I see Lome⁴ change from prespotic⁵ pow'r
To memocratic,⁶ thence to monarchy ;
When I survey Japan—

L'INTIMÉ.

When will the fellow

Have done surveying ?

¹ Babybonia.

⁴ Rome.

² Persians.

⁵ Despotic.

³ Macedonians.

⁶ Democratic.

PETIT-JEAN.

Why this interruption?

I'll say no more.

DANDIN.

You meddling advocate,
Why can't you let him finish his exordium?
I was quite feverish with desire to hear
How from Japan he'd come back to his capon,
When you thrust in your frivolous remark.
Counsel, proceed.

PETIT-JEAN.

Ah, now I've lost the thread.

LEANDER.

Courage! Go on, you've made a fine beginning;
But why d' you let your arms hang at your side
Like that, and stand stock still like any statue?
Come, rouse yourself, and show a little life.

PETIT-JEAN (*moving his arms up and down*).

When—when I see—I see—

LEANDER.

Say what you see.

PETIT-JEAN.

Zounds, I can't hunt two hares at once, you know

THE PROMPTER.

We read—

PETIT-JEAN.

We read—

THE PROMPTER.

In th' *Metamorphoses*—

PETIT-JEAN.

Eh?

THE PROMPTER.

That the Metempsy—

PETIT-JEAN.

The Metempsy—

THE PROMPTER.

—chosis—

PETIT-JEAN.

The chosis—

THE PROMPTER.

Donkey!

PETIT-JEAN.

Donkey.

THE PROMPTER.

Stop!

PETIT-JEAN.

Stop.

THE PROMPTER.

Silly idiot!

PETIT-JEAN.

Silly idiot.

THE PROMPTER.

Dolt!

PETIT-JEAN.

Dolt.

THE PROMPTER.

Plague upon you!

PETIT-JEAN.

Plague upon yourself!

Look at that fellow with his lantern jaws!
Go to the deuce!

DANDIN.

And you, come to the point;
Tell me the facts.

PETIT-JEAN.

Why beat about the bush?
They make me talk in words a fathom long,
In words that reach from here to Jericho.
For my part I've no need of such ado
In saying that a mastiff stole a capon,
(Indeed there's nothing that he won't run off with,)
And ate it up,—the finest in the yard.
The first time that I find him there again,
His trial shall be short, I'll crack his skull.

LEANDER.

A fine conclusion,—worthy of the prologue!

PETIT-JEAN.

It's plain enough, find fault with it who may.

DANDIN.

Call witnesses.

LEANDER.

That's easier said than done,
For witnesses cost dear, or won't come forward.

PETIT-JEAN.

We've got some, all the same,—beyond reproach.

DANDIN.

Produce them, then.

PETIT-JEAN.

I have them in my pocket:
Look here, I've got the capon's head and legs,
See then, and judge.

L'INTIMÉ.

Nay, I object.

DANDIN.

All right,

What's your objection?

L'INTIMÉ.

They're from Maine, my lord.

DANDIN.

Ah, true; they hatch them by the dozen there.

L'INTIMÉ.

My lord—

DANDIN.

Will you be long, Sir? Tell me that.

L'INTIMÉ.

I really cannot say.

DANDIN.

At least, he's honest.

L'INTIMÉ (*rising to a scream*).

Whate'er can daunt a prisoner at the bar,
All that to mortals shows most terrible,
Fortune appears to have array'd against us,
In eloquence and partizanship. For
While on the one hand the deceased's renown
Alarms me, on the other my opponent
With practised tongue confounds.

DANDIN.

Pray, Sir, subdue
Your own o'erpowering accents, if you please.

L'INTIMÉ (*in an ordinary tone*).

I will: I've many others.

(*in a soft tone of voice*).

But howe'er

His sounding periods fill me with mistrust,
And the deceased one's fame; yet still, my lord,
I rest my hopes on your impartial mind.
Before great Dandin innocence is bold,
Before this Cato of our Norman soil;
This Sun of Justice that is never dim;
Victrix causa diis placuit, sed victa Catoni.

DANDIN.

Truly, he argues well.

L'INTIMÉ.

So without fear
I speak, and advocate my righteous cause.
In Aristotle's work on "Politics"
It has been said full well—

DANDIN.

The question, Sir,
Concerns a capon, and not politics.

L'INTIMÉ.

Yes, but the Stagirite's authority
Would prove that good and evil—

DANDIN.

I maintain
That Aristotle has no *locus standi* here.
Come to the facts.

L'INTIMÉ.

Pausanias in his book—

DANDIN.

Discuss the facts.

L'INTIMÉ.

Rebuffi—

DANDIN.

Facts, I say,

L'INTIMÉ.

The great James—

DANDIN.

Facts, facts, facts!

L'INTIMÉ.

Harmonopol—

DANDIN.

I will sum up.

L'INTIMÉ.

You are so quick, my lord.

(speaking rapidly.)

The facts are these. A dog invades a kitchen,
And finds a capon there of good proportions.
Now, he for whom I speak is very hungry,
He against whom I speak lies ready pluck'd,
Then he whose cause I plead, with stealthy step
Draws near, and grabs him against whom I've spoken.
A warrant's issued, he's arrested, counsel
Are call'd, a day is fix'd, I am to speak,
I speak, and I have spoken, There,—I've done!

DANDIN.

Tut, tut! A pretty way to state a case!
His pace is slow and stately while he utters
Irrelevant remarks; but, when he comes
To facts, he gallops.

L'INTIMÉ.

The best part came first.

DANDIN.

Nay, worst. That's not the proper way to plead.
What say the public?

LEANDER.

Quite in th' latest fashion.

L'INTIMÉ *(in an impassioned tone)*.

What happens next? They come,—how do they come?
They chase my client, break into a house,—
Whose house? Your house, my lord,—our judge's house;
The cellar is invaded, where we fled;
We are accused of theft and brigandage,
Dragg'd out, and given over to our foes,
To Master Petit-Jean. You'll bear me out,
My lord, that in the Digest *Si quis canis*,—

De vi—and paragraph *caponibus*,
 The law condemns an outrage of this kind;
 And even were it true my client Ginger
 Had eaten all or part of the said capon,
 All he had done before should be consider'd
 In mitigation of his punishment.
 When has my client merited rebuke?
 Has not your house by him been safely guarded?
 When has he fail'd to bark at robbers' footsteps?
 Witness three proctors, who by Ginger here
 Had their gowns torn. See, I produce the pieces.
 Will you have other proofs of his good conduct?

PETIT-JEAN.

Ah, Master Adam—

L'INTIMÉ.

Peace!

PETIT-JEAN.

But, L'Intimé—

L'INTIMÉ.

Peace!

PETIT-JEAN.

You are growing hoarse.

L'INTIMÉ.

Leave me alone

DANDIN.

Compose yourself, and finish.

L'INTIMÉ (*in a drawing tone*).

Since I may,—
 Take breath,—and am forbidden,—to prolong,
 My speech,—I will without prevarication
 Compendiously express, explain, unfold
 Before your eyes the transcendental truth
 Of this my cause, and of the facts involved.

DANDIN.

Let him say all, and say it twenty times,
Rather than such abridgment. Be you human,
Or fiend incarnate, end—or Heav'n confound you!

L'INTIMÉ.

I've nearly done.

DANDIN.

Ah!

L'INTIMÉ.

Ere the world was made—

DANDIN.

Let us get on, Sir, to the deluge.

L'INTIMÉ.

Ere

The world was made, before it was created,
The world and all the universe lay buried
In the abyss of matter, Earth and Air,
Water and Fire,—all the elements,
Heap'd in confusion, swallow'd up in space;
A shapeless, indistinguishable mass
Form'd one vast chaos, where no order reign'd;
UNUS ERAT TOTO NATURÆ VULTUS IN ORBE,
QUEM GRÆCI DIXERE CHAOS, RUDIS INDIGESTAQUE MOLES.
(DANDIN goes to sleep, and tumbles off his chair.)

LEANDER.

Oh, father! What a fall!

PETIT-JEAN.

He's fast asleep!

LEANDER.

Father, wake up.

PETIT-JEAN.

LEANDER.^o

My father!

DANDIN.

Well, well, what is it? What a man he is!
I've never had so sound a nap before.

LEANDER.

Give sentence, father.

DANDIN.

To the galleys with him!

LEANDER.

A dog sent to the galleys!

DANDIN.

Faith, I know
Nothing about the matter. My head's full
Of chaos and confusion.

L'INTIMÉ (*exhibiting some puppies*).

Come, poor children,
Come, cruel hearts would leave you fatherless;
Come, let your innocence for mercy plead
Yes, here you may behold our misery;
Make us not orphans, give us back our father,
Our father, he to whom we owe our life,
Our father, who—

DANDIN.

Quick, quick, take them away.

L'INTIMÉ.

Our father—

DANDIN.

What a hubbub! Take them off;
They're messing all the place.

L'INTIMÉ.

See, we are weeping.

DANDIN.

My heart already melts with sympathy ;
Oh ! 'tis a sight to touch a father's heart !
I'm terribly perplex'd. The truth is clear ;
Th' offence is proved ; he has himself confess'd it
But, if he be condemn'd, how hard the fate
Of these poor children, left to charity !
I've an engagement,—no one must disturb me.

Scene 4.

DANDIN, LEANDER, CHICANEAU, ISABELLE, PETIT-JEAN
L'INTIMÉ.

CHICANEAU.

My lord—

DANDIN (*to PETIT-JEAN and L'INTIMÉ*).

Yes, I will hear you, and you only.

Good day. But tell me, please, who is that child ?
(*to CHICANEAU*)

CHICANEAU.

That is my daughter.

DANDIN.

Quick, then, call her back.

ISABELLE.

You are engaged.

DANDIN.

No matter, I assure you,

You might have told me that you were her father.
(*to CHICANEAU*)

CHICANEAU,

Sir—

DANDIN.

Let her speak, she knows your business best.

(to ISABELLE.)

Speak, dear—How pretty, and what charming eyes!

But that's not all You must be wise as well,

It does me good to see such youth and beauty.

I've been a gay young fellow in my day,

And been much talk'd about.

ISABELLE.

I well believe it.

DANDIN.

Tell me, now, who you wish should lose his cause.

ISABELLE.

No one

DANDIN.

For you I will do anything.

Speak

ISABELLE.

I am sure I'm much obliged to you.

DANDIN.

Hast ever witness'd anybody tortured?

ISABELLE.

No, and I trust I never shall, my lord

DANDIN.

If you would like it, you shall see it done.

ISABELLE.

Ah! could one ever see poor wretches suffer?

DANDIN.

It serves to pass away an hour or two.

CHICANEAU.

My lord, I come to tell you—

LEANDER.

I can state
The whole affair, my father, in two words;
It is about a marriage. You must know
That all is settled, and your sanction only
Is wanting. Both the lovers long to wed,
The father to his daughter's wish consents.
Will you confirm the contract?

DANDIN (*resuming his seat*).

Let them marry
Without delay, to-morrow if they please,
To-day if need be.

LEANDER.

See, my father's yours,
Greet him, my love.

CHICANEAU.

How's this?

DANDIN.

What myst'ry's here?

LEANDER.

Your judgment is precisely carried out.

DANDIN.

I can't revoke the sentence I've pronounced.

CHICANEAU.

But surely you'll consult my daughter's wishes.

LEANDER.

By all means. Let fair Isabelle decide.

CHICANEAU.

Well, are you dumb? It is your turn to speak.

ISABELLE.

I do not dare to appeal against the judgment.

CHICANEAU.

I'll do it, then.

LEANDER (*showing him a paper*).

Look at this writing, Sir.
You will not challenge your own signature?

CHICANEAU.

What is it, pray?

LEANDER.

A marriage contract, Sir,
All duly sign'd and seal'd.

CHICANEAU.

I have been trick'd,
But I'll have satisfaction. This shall lead
To twenty lawsuits. If you get my daughter,
You shall not get my money.

LEANDER.

Have I ask'd it?
Give me your daughter, I want nothing else.

CHICANEAU.

Ah!

LEANDER.

Father, are you pleased with your day's work?

DANDIN.

Right well. Let suits flow in abundantly,
And I will pass my life with you, content.
The advocates, however, must not be
So lengthy. What about the culprit?

LEANDER.

Pardon him. Let us all rejoice to-day. Father,

DANDIN.

Well, let him go.

(to ISABELLE.)

For your sake, dear, he's free.
I'll take a holiday, then try new cases.

BRITANNICUS.

INTRODUCTION TO BRITANNICUS.

EXCEPT in the matter of chronological accuracy, the "Annals of Tacitus" have been closely followed as the historical groundwork of this tragedy, but Racine himself tells us that it cost him more pains in its composition than any other of his plays, and the result of this elaboration is that the hand of the artist has not been able to conceal its art under the semblance of spontaneous nature.

"Britannicus" was first acted at the Hôtel de Bourgogne, in December, 1669. It met with much adverse criticism, and was slow in establishing itself in public favour; nor is this to be wondered at, for it requires careful study to appreciate its merits, and Voltaire has aptly termed it "*la pièce des connoisseurs*." The strongest character is Nero's mother, Agrippina. Nero himself, Burrus, and Narcissus are also well drawn, but Britannicus and Junia are insipid and uninteresting.

CHARACTERS.

NERO, emperor, son of Agrippina.

BRITANNICUS, son of Messalina and of the emperor Claudius.

AGRIPPINA, widow of Domitius Ahenobarbus, the father of Nero, and
widow by her second marriage of the emperor Claudius.

JUNIA, beloved by Britannicus.

BURRUS, tutor of Nero.

NARCISSUS, tutor of Britannicus.

ALBINA, confidential friend of Agrippina.

GUARDS.

The scene is laid at Rome, in a chamber of Nero's palace.

BRITANNICUS.

ACT I.

Scene 1.

AGRIPPINA, ALBINA.

ALBINA.

Whilst Nero courts soft slumbers, why should you
Come here to tarry his awakening?
Shall Cæsar's mother wander thro' these halls,
And, unattended, watch beside his door,
Alone? Retire to your apartments, Madam.

AGRIPPINA.

I must not leave him for a single moment.
Here will I wait for him, engross'd with cares
He causes me, so long as he may sleep.
All I foretold is but too well confirm'd;
Nero has doom'd the prince Britannicus.
Nero has thrown the reins on his impatience;
Weary of being loved, he fain would be
A terror. Young Britannicus torments him,
And every day I feel myself becoming,
In my turn, irksome.

ALBINA.

You, to whom he owes
The breath of life, who call'd him to the throne
From his low station, disinheriting
The son of Claudius, that Domitius might
Bear Cæsar's name? All speaks on your behalf,
And claims his love.

AGRIPPINA.

'Tis due to me, *Albina* ;
All I have done would win a generous heart,
But all is odious to ingratitude.

ALBINA.

Ingratitude? Nay, all his conduct shows
A soul well taught to heed the voice of duty.
For three whole years what has he said of done
But what gives Rome the promise of a reign
Of perfect justice? Under his mild sway
She deems the days return'd when consuls bore
Authority supreme. Paternal rule
Marks the young Nero virtuous as Augustus
In his old age. '

AGRIPPINA.

Nay, interest cannot make
Me blind. 'Tis true that Nero has begun
E'en as Augustus ended, but the future
May make the past forgotten, and I fear
As one began, so will the other end.
Disguise is vain; I read upon his brow
The savage bent of a Domitius
Mix'd with Neronic pride derived from me.
The face of Tyranny is ever mild
At first; e'en Caius once was Rome's delight,
But his feign'd clemency soon turn'd to madness,
And Rome's delight became her detestation.
What matters it to me, in any case,
Tho' Nero's virtues should remain unsullied?
Did I commit to him the helm of State,
That he might please the people and the senate?
The father of his country let him be,
If so he will, but let him not forget
His mother's claims. How can that crime be call'd
Which daylight has reveal'd? He knows full well
That Junia by Britannicus is loved;
And this same Nero, who is virtue's model,
Makes night the screen to have her carried off!
What moves him? Is it hatred, or desire?

Is it his only joy to injure them?
Or does his malice visit on their heads
Spite against me for lending them support?

ALBINA.

How lending them support?

AGRIPPINA.

Hush, dear Albina;
I know to me alone they owe their ruin;
That 'twas by me Britannicus was hurl'd
Down from the throne that he inherited;
That Junia's brother cast away his life,
Debarr'd by me from marriage with Octavia,
Silanus, upon whom Claudius had cast
An eye of favour, heir of great Augustus.
Nero has all, and I, for my reward,
Must hold the balance evenly between them,
That some day, in his turn, Britannicus
May do the same between my son and me.

ALBINA.

With what design?

AGRIPPINA.

I thus secure a port
Against the coming storm. I cannot hold him,
Save with this bridle.

ALBINA.

But against a son
Such care is surely vain.

AGRIPPINA.

I should soon fear him,
If he fear'd me no longer.

ALBINA.

Your alarm
Perchance is groundless. But if Nero fails
In filial duty we have fail'd to mark

The change, and these are secrets 'between him
And you. Whate'er new titles Rome bestows,
Nero confers them all upon his mother.
His lavish love withholds not aught from you ;
Your name in Rome is reverenced like his own ;
Whilst poor Octavia is scarcely mention'd.
Your ancestor Augustus honour'd less
His Livia. The fasces, deck'd with bays,
March before Nero's mother, ne'er before
Had woman such distinction. How should he
Display his gratitude ?

AGRIPPINA.

With less respect,
And greater confidence. I scorn such honours,
Seeing my influence wanes as these increase.
The time is gone when Nero, still a youth,
Answer'd the wishes of my doting heart,
When upon me he lean'd in every strait,
When my command gather'd the senate here,
And present, tho' conceal'd behind a screen,
Mine was the animating touch that moved them.
Uncertain then of Rome's capricious will,
His greatness had not turn'd the monarch's head.
My memory with pain recalls the day
When first I found him dazzled with the glare
Of glory ; many a potentate had sent
From Earth's remotest realms envoys to greet him.
I went to take my place upon the throne
Beside him ; by whose counsel he disgraced me
I know not, but, as soon as he perceived me,
He show'd displeasure on his countenance,
Whereby my heart grew ominous of ill.
Then with a feign'd respect that mask'd the insult,
He quickly rose, and, running to embrace me,
Turn'd my approaching footsteps from the throne
Since that hard blow has Agrippina's pow'r
Been hurrying to its fall with rapid pace.
All but the shadow gone, my favour's sought
Less than the voice of Seneca or Burrus.

• ALBINA.

Ah, if your heart is fill'd with such suspicions,
Why keep the fatal poison in your breast?
Go, and at Cæsar's lips resolve your doubts

• AGRIPPINA

Others are always by when Cæsar sees me,
He gives me audience at fix'd times, in public;
He answers or is silent as he's prompted
We have two masters, and with watchful eye
One or the other marks each interview
But I will follow him the more he shuns me,
And turn his own confusion to my profit
I hear his door unfasten'd Let us go,
And ask him what he means by this abduction,
And, unawares, he may the truth reveal
Ha, Burrus! He has been with him already.

Scene 2.

AGRIPPINA, BURRUS, ALBINA.

BURRUS.

Madam, I come to tell you, in the name
Of Cæsar, that an order which alarm'd you
Is but a wise precaution, and of this
The Emperor wills that you should be inform'd.

AGRIPPINA

Then let us enter, since it is his pleasure,
And learn his purpose better

BURRUS

For some time
Cæsar has sought seclusion By a postern,
Unknown to many, both the consuls came
Before you, Madam But I will return,—

AGRIPPINA.

No, I will not disturb his privacy ;
 But let us two, with somewhat less constraint,
 For once with frankness interchange our thoughts.

BURREUS

The tongue of Burrus ever scorn'd a falsehood

AGRIPPINA

How long do you intend to hide him from me ?
 Am I for ever to be held intrusive
 When I would see him ? Have I raised you then
 So high, only to have you place a bar
 Between my son and me ? Dare you not trust him
 A moment out of sight ? Do you dispute
 With Seneca the glory of effacing
 His mother's image from his memory ?
 And has my trust fed your ingratitude,
 Till 'neath the shadow of his name you rule
 Supreme ? I cannot think that you would make me,
 Who might have left you in obscurity,
 Your creature,—me, whose ancestors have fill'd
 The throne,—me, daughter, sister, wife, and mother
 Of your imperial masters. What, then, mean you ?
 Think you my voice has made an emperor
 Only to place two others over me ?
 Nero's no more a child ; is it not time
 He ceased to fear you, and began to reign ?
 How long must he see all things thro' your eyes ?
 There are ancestral models he may copy,
 And choose between Tiberius and Augustus,
 Or follow, if he can, Germanicus,
 My sire. I dare not rank myself with these,
 But there are lessons he may learn from me,
 At any rate, the caution that imposes
 Due limits to a prince's confidence
 In any subject.

BURREUS.

I am charged to-day
 T' excuse a single act on Cæsar's part ;

But since, without desiring my defence,
You lay on me the blame for all his deeds,
I'll answer with the candour of a soldier,
Who knows not, Madam, how to gloze the truth.
To me, you trusted Cæsar's youthful years,
I own it, and am bound ne'er to forget it;
But have I ever sworn I would betray him,
Or make him do your will in everything?
I am no more responsible to you,
But to imperial Rome, which in my hands
Sees safety or destruction. He who once
Was son of yours is master of the world.
If those were sought who might cajole his youth,
Could only Seneca and I mislead?
Why were not flatterers suffer'd to direct him?
Were we recall'd from exile as corrupters?
Could not the servile court of Claudius furnish
A thousand fitter than ourselves, all eager
To raise themselves by Cæsar's degradation,
Till he grew old in long protracted childhood?
What would you, Madam? Are you not respected?
Is not your name held sacred, link'd with Cæsar's?
The Emperor, 'tis true, no longer comes
Daily to lay his sceptre at your feet,
And pay you humble court. But gratitude
Need not involve dependence so unworthy.
Must Nero always be a timid child,
Nor dare, except in name, to be Augustus?
Rome, let me tell you, justifies his conduct,
So long in bondage to three base-born upstarts;
And, only just relieved from yoke so galling,
Dates her recover'd liberty from Nero!
Nay more. E'en Virtue's self seems born anew,
And to be master means no more to plunder;
The People freely choose their magistrates;
Those whom the soldiers trust are made commanders;
Still faithful in the army and the senate
Are Corbulo and Thræsea, tho' in fame
The foremost. Desert isles, which senators
Peopled with exiles, hold th' informers now.
What matters it that Nero trusts us still,

Provided that our counsels aid his glory,
And Rome, throughout a prosperous reign, have freedom
Unfailing as th' omnipotence of Cæsar ?
But Nero, Madam, does not need our guidance ;
Our part is to obey, not to direct him.
He has examples in his ancestors,
Whereby to regulate his steps aright ;
And happy he if, link'd in one long chain,
His later virtues vie with those of youth !

AGRIPPINA.

So, daring not to count upon the future,
You think your prince will go astray without you.
Do you, who, thus far with your work content,
Come hither to bear witness of his virtues,
Tell me why Nero has become a robber,
And carried off the sister of Silanus ?
Is it to sully by so gross an insult
My ancestors whose blood fills Junia's veins ?
Of what does he accuse her ? By what crime
Has she, in one day, grown so dangerous ;
She who, till then, bore grandeur modestly ;
Who, but for this night's work, would ne'er have seen him,
And would have counted it a signal favour
Had she been kept for ever from his sight ?

BURREUS.

She's under no suspicion of a crime,
Nor has the emperor as yet condemn'd her.
There is no object here to wound her eyes,
She is at home among her ancestors.
Her title to the throne is strong enough
To make her husband raise an insurrection ;
'Tis right that Cæsar's blood should be allied
Only to such as Cæsar well can trust ;
Nor without his consent, as you must own,
Should any wed the offspring of Augustus.

AGRIPPINA.

I understand you ; Nero, by your mouth,
Tells me Britannicus relies in vain

Upon my choice; that I have vainly sought
To turn his eyes from his misfortunes with
A bait so tempting. 'Tis the Emperor's will
To show that Agrippina promises
More than she can fulfil; Rome rates too highly
A mother's influence; and by this affront
He'll undeceive her, and teach all the world
Not to confound an emperor with a son.
This he may do, Yet am I bold to tell him
To make his sceptre strong before he strikes.
In forcing me to match my feeble arm
Against him, he betrays how weak his own is;
And it may be that, in the balance tested,
My name will have more weight than he supposes.

BURREUS.

What! will you always doubt your son's respect?
Can he not take one step but you mistrust it?
How can he think you Junia's partisan,
Or reconciled to young Britannicus?
Will you support your foes, that you may find
A pretext for complaining against him?
At every trivial rumour that you hear,
Will you be always ready to divide
The empire? Shall continual dread possess you,
That asks solution e'en when you embrace him?
Be not so careful to find food for censure,
But exercise a mother's fond indulgence.
Suffer some slight rather than make it public,
Lest so the Court be taught to disregard you.

AGRIPPINA.

And who would seek support from Agrippina,
When Nero doth himself proclaim my ruin,
When he would have me banish'd from his presence,
And Burrus dares to keep me at his threshold?

BURREUS.

Madam, I see 'tis time that I were silent,
My frankness only causes your displeasure.

Pain is unjust ; and all the arguments
That fail to soothe it aggravate suspicion.
Here comes Britannicus. I will retire,
And you shall hear with pity his disgrace,
Blaming for that, it may be, Madam, those
Whose counsels Cæsar has least deign'd to follow.

Scene 3.

AGRIPPINA, BRITANNICUS, NARCISSUS, ALBINA.

AGRIPPINA.

Whither so fast ? What restless ardour, Prince,
Casts you thus blindly in the midst of foes ?
Whom do you come to seek ?

BRITANNICUS.

Whom seek ? By Heav'n,
Here, madam, here is all that I have lost.
Hemm'd in by multitudes of savage troops,
Hither has Junia been ignobly dragg'd.
Alas, what horror must her timid heart
Have felt at such unwonted spectacle !
Yes, they have torn her from me. Cruel mandate,
That parts two lovers misery united !
Doubtless they grudged that we, mingling our sorrows,
Should help each other to endure our woes.

AGRIPPINA.

Enough. I feel your wrongs as much as you do ;
And my complaints have gone before your murmurs.
But I am well aware that helpless anger
Does not absolve me of my solemn promise.
You do not comprehend me. Would you do so,
Follow my steps to Pallas. There I'll wait you.

Scene 4.

BRITANNICUS, NARCISSUS.

BRITANNICUS.

Narcissus, can I trust her word and make
Her umpire in my quarrel with her son?
What say you? Is she not that Agrippina
Whom erst my father married, to my ruin,
And who, you say, finding his ebbing life
Too long for her, cut the last remnant short?

NARCISSUS.

No matter. She, like you, feels herself outraged.
Has she not promised you the hand of Junia?
Unite your griefs, combine your interests;
This palace vainly echoes your regrets;
And, whilst with suppliant voice you here are seen
Spreading complaints around instead of terrors,
Your fierce resentment lost in idle words,
Without a doubt you will complain for ever.

BRITANNICUS.

You know, Narcissus, whether I intend
To be inured to tame submissiveness,
If, by my fall affrighted, I renounced
The throne for ever which my birthright gave me.
But I am still alone. My father's friends
Are grown such strangers as to chill my heart;
And those who in the Court rest true to me
Yet hold themselves aloof from one so young.
After the brief experience of a year
Has made me know how wretched is my lot,
What see I round me but false friends suborn'd
To watch my every step with sleepless eyes?
Chosen by Nero for so base an office,
They sell to him the secrets of my soul,
And daily take their profit out of me,

He sees my aims beforehand, hears my converse,
And knows what passes in my breast as well
As you. What thinks Narcissus ?

NARCISSUS.

Feeble-minded—

You should choose friends on whom you can rely,
Nor be so lavish of your secrets, Sir.

BRITANNICUS.

Narcissus, you say true ; but this mistrust
A noble heart is ever slow to learn,
Too long deceived ; but I believe in you,
Or rather I have vow'd to trust no other.
My father oft assured me of your zeal,
Of all his freedmen, you alone have proved
Faithful, and kept your eyes open to aid me,
Saving me still from countless hidden rocks.
Go, see then if the noise of this new storm
Has fann'd the smouldering courage of my friends ;
Watch well their eyes, attend to their discourse,
See if I may expect true help from them ;
But chiefly in this palace well observe
With what precautions Nero guards the princess.
Learn if her precious life is out of danger,
And if I still may be allow'd to see her.
Meanwhile to Nero's mother I'll repair,
She is with Pallas, whom my father freed,
As he did you. I'll stir her wrath, and, may be,
Pledge her to move farther than she intends.

ACT II.

Scene 1.

NERO, BURRUS, NARCISSUS, GUARDS.

NERO.

Burrus, be sure of this! tho' she's unjust,
She is my mother, and I'll take no notice
Of her caprices; but I will not spare
The underling who dares to foster them.
Pallas instils his poison in her ears,
And every day corrupts Britannicus;
His voice alone they hear, and, if we follow'd
Their steps, with Pallas we perhaps should find them.
I've borne too much, he must be parted from them.
For the last time I say it, let him go;
'Tis my command, and, ere this day is done,
My Court and Rome too must be quit of them.
Despatch, the safety of the State's concern'd.
Come here, Narcissus.

(to the Guards.)

Let my guards retire.

Scene 2.

NERO, NARCISSUS.

NARCISSUS.

Thank Heav'n, my lord, Junia is in your hands,
And so to-day the peace of Rome's secured;
Your enemies, cast down from their vain hopes,
Have gone to Pallas to bewail their weakness.
But what is this? I see you vex'd, confounded,
And more dismay'd than is Britannicus.
What does that frowning air of gloom portend,

Those random looks that roam uneasily ?
All smiles on you, and Fortune crowns your wishes.

NERO.

The die is cast, Narcissus ; Nero loves.

o NARCISSUS.

You, Sirs ?

NERO.

A moment since,—and yet for ever.
Love, said I love ? Nay, Junia is my idol.

NARCISSUS.

What, you love *her* ?

NERO.

My curiosity

Moved me this night to see her on arrival
Here. She was sad, and raised to Heav'n her eyes
Tear-stain'd, that shone amid the flash of arms ;
In beauty unadorn'd, in simple garb,
As when they seiz'd her in her sleep. I know not
Whether that disarray, the torch-lit darkness,
The cries that broke the silence, and the faces
Of her ferocious ravishers, enhanced
The timid sweetness of those lovely eyes ;
But, with so fair a spectacle entranced,
I tried to speak, but felt myself tongue-tied ;
Amazement seized me, and I could not move,
And suffer'd her to pass to her apartments.
I sought my chamber. There, in solitude,
Vainly I tried to turn my thoughts from her ;
But, ever present to my eyes, I seem'd
To talk with her. I loved the very tears
I caused to flow. And sometimes, but too late,
I sued for her forgiveness, and my sighs
Ended in threats. Thus, nursing my new passion,
I have not closed mine eyes, that watch'd for daylight,
But I may conjure up too fair an image
Of her whom I beheld at such advantage.
What says Narcissus ?

NARCISSUS.

Who'd believe, my lord,
That she has lived so long by you unseen?

NERO.

You know it well, Narcissus. Moved by wrath,
That held me guilty of her brother's death,
Or treasuring with jealous care a pride
Severe, that grudged mine eyes her dawning charms;
True to her grief, and courting dim seclusion,
She stole away, and shunn'd all admiration:
And 'tis this virtue, to the Court so new,
That in its perseverance piques my love.
Is there another damsel here in Rome
Who, if I loved her, would not grow more vain
At such an honour? Is there one but tries
Her amorous glances upon Cæsar's heart,
Soon as she learns their pow'r? She alone,
The modest Junia, scorns the boon they covet,
Nor deigns, it may be, e'en to seek to learn
If Cæsar merits love, or knows its rapture.
Tell me, is young Britannicus her lover?

NARCISSUS.

Her lover, asks my liege?

NERO.

He is too young
To know himself, or love's enchanting poison.

NARCISSUS.

Love never waits for reason, good my lord.
Doubt not, he loves. Taught by such potent charm
His eyes have learn'd to melt with tenderness;
He knows how best to meet her slightest wish,
And, it may be, already can persuade her.

NERO.

What? Can the boy have won her heart's allegiance

NARCISSUS.

I know not, Sire. But what I can, I'll tell you.
 I've seen him sometimes tear himself away,
 Full of a wrath which he conceals from you,
 Vex'd at the Court's ingratitude that shuns him,
 Chafing against your pow'r and his subjection,
 Fear and impatience swaying him in turn,
 He goes to Junia, and returns contented.

NERO.

The more unhappy he, for learning how
 To please her. He should rather wish her anger,
 Nero will not be jealous without vengeance.

NARCISSUS.

You, Sire? And why should you be ill at ease?
 Junia has pitied him, and shared his sorrows;
 Sure she has seen no other tears than his,
 But now, my lord, that, with her eyes unseal'd,
 She shall behold, so near, your royal splendour,
 And kings uncrown'd stand in attendance round you,
 Unknown amidst the crowd her lover too,
 Hang on your eyes, and honour'd by a look
 Which you, my prince, may chance to cast upon them;
 When she shall see you, from that height of glory
 Come to confess her victory with sighs,
 The master of a heart already charm'd,
 You'll have but to command, and she will love you.

NERO.

How much chagrin must I prepare to meet!
 What wearisome entreaties!

NARCISSUS.

Why, who hinders
 My lord's good pleasure?

NERO.

All—Octavia, Burrus, &
 Seneca, Agrippina, Rome herself,

Three years all stainless. ° Not that for Octavia
Remains one tender relic of the tie
That bound us. Long since weary of her love
Rarely mine eyes deign to behold her tears ;
Happy, if soon the favour of divorce
Relieve me of a yoke imposed by force !
The gods themselves have secretly condemn'd her ;
Four years her earnest pray'rs have fruitless proved
They show not that her virtue touches them
By honouring her cotch with any pledge ;
And vainly does the State demand an heir.

NARCISSUS.

Why hesitate, my lord, to cast her off ?
Your sceptre and your heart alike condemn'd her
Did not Augustus, when he sigh'd for Livia,
By twin divorce unite her to himself ?
And to that lucky severance you owe
The crown. Tiberius, whom his marriage link'd
With him and you, dared to repudiate
The daughter e'en before the father's eyes.
You only, thwarting your own wish, refuse
A course so welcome.

NERO.

Know you not the rage
Of Agrippina ? Her I seem to see
Bringing to me Octavia, and with eye
Of fury bidding me respect a bond
So sacred, tied by her, and charging me
In no soft terms with long ingratitude.
How shall I face her violent attacks ?

NARCISSUS.

Be your own master, Sire, and hers as well.
Will you submit to tutelage for ever ?
Reign for yourself ; too long you've reign'd for her.
Fear you to do so ? Nay, you fear her not :
Have you not just now banish'd haughty Pallas,
Whose insolence you know that she supports ?

NERO.

Out of her sight, I threaten or command,
List to your counsels, venture to approve them ;
My temper rises, and I think to brave her ;
But I will lay my feelings bare before you,
Soon as ill luck into her presence brings me,
Either I dare not then disown the spell
Of eyes where I have read my duty long,
Or the remembrance of past kindness grants
To her control of all that she has giv'n,
And all my efforts are of no avail ;
My spirit trembles, overawed by hers.
And 'tis to free myself from this dependence,
I everywhere avoid and so offend her,
Nor spare from time to time to rouse her anger,
That she may shun me, as I fly from her.
But I too long detain you : go, Narcissus,
Lest to Britannicus you seem intriguer.

NARCISSUS.

No, no ; I have his perfect confidence :
He thinks I see you, Sire, by his command,
To hear from you all that concerns himself,
And by my mouth would learn your secret plans.
Impatient to behold his love once more,
He waits the aid my trusty cares may bring him.

NERO.

Thereto I give consent. Yes, he shall see her :
Convey the pleasing news.

NARCISSUS.

Banish him from her.

NERO.

I have my reasons. Trust me, good Narcissus,
He shall not see her without paying dearly.
But boast to him of your successful scheme,

Tell him that I have been deceived myself,
And that he sees her without my permission.
She comes. Go, find your master ; bring him here.

Scene 3.

NERO, JUNIA.

NERO.

Your cheek is pale, and you seem anxious, lady.
Read you some gloomy presage in my eyes ?

JUNIA.

I cannot hide from you, Sire, my mistake ;
I thought to see not Cæsar, but Octavia.

NERO.

I know it, Madam, and Octavia's fortune
In gaining your good graces makes me envious.

JUNIA.

You, Sire ?

NERO.

And think you that Octavia only
Within these walls has eyes to see your merits ?

JUNIA.

Whom else can I implore to pity me,
And tell what crime I've unawares committed ?
You punish it, my lord, and needs must know it
Let Junia learn her fault, I do beseech you.

NERO.

Is it a light offence, then, to have kept
So long your beauty in concealment, Madam ?
Has bounteous Heav'n its choicest gifts bestow'd,
That you should bury what was meant to shine ?

Is not Britannicus afraid to hide
His growing passion and your charms from us?
Why, till to-day, have you so ruthlessly
Made us an exile in our Court from eyes
So bright? 'Tis said too, Madam, you permit
Without offence his amorous overtures:
I'll not believe that you have favour'd them
Without consulting us, nor been so heedless
Of due decorum, as to plight your troth,
And leave us to the voice of common rumour
For information.

JUNIA.

I confess, my lord,
His sighs have sometimes told his heart's desires.
With eyes for ever fix'd upon a maid,
Sole relic of a famous family,
He thinks, perhaps, of how in happier days
His father destined her to be his bride:
He loves me, heeding his imperial sire,
Your mother's wish,—and may I add your own?
Your will is ever so conform'd to hers,—

NERO.

My mother has her views, and I have mine.
We'll speak no more of her and Claudius;
'Tis not their choice that can determine mine;
I, and I only, must decide for you,
And at my hands I'll have you choose a husband.

JUNIA.

My lord, bethink you that another union
Would bring dishonour on my ancestors.

NERO.

Lady, not so; the spouse of whom I speak
Need feel no shame to range his parentage
With yours. You may consent without a blush
To his addresses.

JUNIA.

Who, then, is he, Sire?

NERO.

Madam, myself.

JUNIA.

You?

NERO.

I would name another,
If other name I knew higher than Nero's.
My eyes have search'd the Court, Rome, and the world,
To choose you such a partner as might meet
Your approbation; and the more I seek
Into what hands this treasure may be trusted,
The more I see Cæsar alone deserves
To hold it, he alone deserves your love,
And should entrust you to no hands but those
To which the empire of the world's committed.
Do you, yourself, recall your earliest years,
When Claudius betrothed you to his son;
'Twas at a time when he intended naming
That son, one day, the heir of all his empire.
The gods declared for me,—oppose them not,
But follow where they point to sovereignty.
Vainly have they bestow'd this signal honour,
Unless your heart should be united with it;
If cares so great be soothed not by your smiles,
If, while I give to vigilant alarms
Those days, by others envied, grudged by me,
I may not breathe some moments at your feet.
Let not Octavia's image cloud your eyes;
Rome, like myself, to you her suffrage gives,
Rejects Octavia, and would have me loose
A marriage tie that Heav'n itself disowns.
Consider what I say and ponder well
This choice, well worthy of a prince who loves you
Worthy of those bright eyes too long immured,
And of the world to which your charms are due.

JUNIA.

My lord, good cause have I to stand astonish'd ;
 All in the course of one short day I see
 Myself brought hither as a criminal,
 And, when I, trembling, come before your eyes,
 Hardly confiding in my innocence,
 At once you offer me Octavia's place.
 Yet am I bold to say I have deserved
 Neither this dazzling honour, nor this insult.
 And can you wish, my liege, that a poor maid,
 Who, almost soon as she as born, beheld
 Her home destroy'd, and in obscurity
 Nursing her sorrow, learn'd to be resign'd,
 Should, at a single step, pass from such darkness
 To sit where all the world may gaze upon her,
 In brilliance that she shrink from, seen afar,
 Usurping majesty that is another's?

NERO.

Have I not said already, I renounce her?
 Dispel those timid fears, or bashful scruples ;
 Think not my present choice is blind and rash ;
 I know you worthy, only give consent.
 Remember from what ancestry you spring ;
 Do not prefer to those substantial honours
 Wherewith the hand of Cæsar would endue you,
 The glory of refusal, to be follow'd
 By vain regrets.

JUNIA.

Heav'n knows my secret thoughts.
 I take no pride in a vainglorious boast,
 And know the greatness of the prize you offer ;
 But all the more should I, the brighter shone
 My fortune, be ashamed to face the guilt
 Of having plunder'd her whose right it is.

NERO.

Nay, you consult her interests too much,
 The claims of friendship scarce can reach so far.

But let us leave delusions, and be plain ;
The sister moves you less than does the brother,
And for Britannicus—

JUNIA.

He has known how
To touch my heart, and freely I confess it.
Such frankness may, perchance, be indiscreet,
But never have my lips belied my heart.
In absence from the Court I could not think
That I had need to learn the art of feigning.
I love Britannicus, his destined bride
When marriage was to lead to sovereignty ;
But that ill fate which has denied the throne,
His honours fled, his palace desolate,
The courtiers whom his fall has banish'd from him,
Serve but as ties to Junia's constancy.
Here all things minister to your desires ;
Your days flow calmly by in ceaseless pleasures,
Th' exhaustless source thereof your sovereign pow'r ;
Or, if some trouble mar their placid course,
The universe solicitous to please you,
Hastens to blot it from your memory.
Lonely the lot of poor Britannicus ;
In all his sorrows he has me alone
To sympathize, my tears his only solace,
That lead him sometimes to forget his woes.

NERO.

Ah, 'tis that solace and those tears I envy.
For them another with his life should pay ;
But milder treatment keep I for this prince ;
He shall appear before you soon, fair lady.

JUNIA.

Your virtues, Sire, have ever reassured me.

NERO.

I might forbid him access to your presence ;
But I would fain anticipate the danger

To which resentful wrath might carry him.
I do not wish his death; better that he
Should hear his sentence from the lips he loves.
Is his life dear to you? Then part him from you,
Without cause given to believe me jealous.
Incur the odium of his banishment,
And, whether by your words or by your silence,
In any case by frigid looks, persuade him
To take his wishes and his hopes elsewhere.

JUNIA.

I! to pronounce a sentence so severe!
My tongue will swear I meant the contrary.
E'en could I so prove traitor to myself,
My eyes would still forbid him to obey me.

NERO.

Curtain'd close by, I shall behold you, Madam.
Shut up your love within your inmost heart;
No secret language shall escape my notice,
Looks that you fancy mute I shall o'erhear;
And death to him shall be the sure reward,
If sigh or gesture unawares betray you.

JUNIA.

Alas! if I dare still form any wish,
Grant me, my lord, that I may never see him.

Scène 4.

NERO, JUNIA, NARCISSUS.

NARCISSUS.

Britannicus, my lord, asks for the princess;
He is at hand.

NERO.

Then let him enter.

JUNIA.

Sire!

NERO.

I leave you; and his fate on you depends
More than on me. Remember I shall see you.

Scene 5.

JUNIA, NARCISSUS.

JUNIA.

Ah! dear Narcissus, run to meet your master;
Tell him,—Oh! I'm undone, I see him coming.

Scene 6.

BRITANNICUS, JUNIA, NARCISSUS.

BRITANNICUS.

What happiness, dear damsel, brings me near you?
May I then taste so sweet an interview?
But ah, amidst this pleasure, grief devours me
To think I may not hope to see you more.
Now must I steal, with many a subterfuge,
A privilege that erst you granted daily.
Ah! what a night I've pass'd, with what awakening!
Your tears have not disarm'd our cruel foes!
What was your lover doing? Did some god
Grudge me the boon of dying at your feet?
Alas! Have you in secret, struck with terror,
Made your complaint to me? Have you, my princess,
Vouchsafed to breathe a wish that I were with you?
Thought you upon the woes that you would cost me?
What! say you nought, looking as cold as ice?
Is't thus you comfort me for my disgrace?
Speak: we're alone. Our enemy, deceived,

Is busied somewhere else while we're together,
Take full advantage of his happy absence.

JUNIA.

His pow'r pervades each corner of this palace,
Its very walls, Sir, may have eyes to see us ;
Cæsar is never absent from this place.

BRITANNICUS.

And how long have you been so timorous ?
What ! does your love consent to be in bondage
Already ? What has changed the heart that swore
To make e'en Nero envious of our love ?
But banish, Madam, such uncall'd for fear ;
All hearts have not yet lost their loyalty ;
I see no eye but doth approve my anger.
We have the Emperor's mother on our side ;
And Rome herself, offended at his conduct,—

JUNIA.

Surely your tongue, Sir, contradicts your thought :
You have yourself told me a thousand times
That with one common voice Rome praises him ;
You ever render'd homage to his merits,
'Tis grief distracts you, and dictates this language.

BRITANNICUS.

Your words surprise me, I must needs confess it ;
To hear you praise him was not what I sought.
Scarce can I seize a favourable moment
To make you share the grief that overwhelms me,
And these few precious moments are consumed
In praises of the foe who crushes us !
How different from yourself has one day made you !
Why, e'en your looks have learn'd strange reticence.
What's this ? You seem to fear to meet my eyes !
Am I then odious ? Can it be that Nero
Finds favour ? If I thought so,—Ah, by Heav'n,
Dispel this darkness you have cast around me.
Speak. Is Britannicus no more remember'd ?

JUNIA.

Pray, Sir, withdraw ; the Emperor is coming.

BRITANNICUS.

This stroke, Narcissus, severs my last hope.

Scene 7.

NERO, JUNIA, NARCISSUS.

NERO.

Madam,—

JUNIA.

No, Sire, I cannot hear a word
I have obey'd you. Let at least my tears
Flow freely, now that he no more can see them.

Scene 8.

NERO, NARCISSUS.

NERO.

Well, my Narcissus, you have seen the ardour
With which they love, apparent e'en in silence !
My rival has her heart, 'tis plain enough ;
My joy shall be to drive him to despair.
How charmingly does fancy phint his anguish ;
And I have seen him doubt whether she loves him.
I'll follow her. My rival waits your presence
To vent his fury. Go, with fresh suspicions
Torment him ; and while I witness the tears
She fondly sheds for him, make him pay dearly
For boon that he despises.

NARCISSUS (*alone*).

Once more Fortune

Invites me : shall I then refuse her offer ?
Nay, to the end I'll follow her behests, c
And doom the wretched to secure my weal.

ACT III.

Scene 1.

NERO, BURRUS.

BURRUS.

Pallas will be obedient, Sire.

NERO

And how
Has Agrippina seen her pride confounded ?

BURRUS.

Doubt not, your Majesty, the blow strikes home,
And soon the storm will burst in loud reproaches.
Her wrath has long begun to show itself,
Nor can it stop at unavailing clamour.

NERO.

Why, what design think you she meditates ?

BURRUS.

Always is Agrippina to be dreaded :
Your army and all Rome revere her lineage :
They ne'er forget Germanicus, her father.
She knows her influence ; you know her courage ;
And that which makes me dread her all the more
Is that her fury by yourself is fed,
And that you give her arms to fight against you.

NERO.

I, Burrus?

BURRUS.

Yes, my lord; that love which holds you—

NERO.

I take your meaning. But it can't be help'd :
My own heart tells me more than you can say,
And yet I cannot choose but love.

BURRUS.

'Tis fancy,
My liege; and, satisfied with slight resistance,
You fear an evil feeble at its birth.
But if your heart, strong in the course of duty,
Refuse to hold a parley with its foe;
If you consult the glory of your past;
If you recall to your remembrance, Sire,
Octavia's virtues of such recompense
Unworthy, and her love proof against scorn;
If, more than all, avoiding Junia's presence,
You doom your eyes to a brief spell of absence;
Trust me, howe'er this passion seems to charm you,
None love, my lord, unless they wish to love.

NERO.

I'll trust you, Burrus, when, 'mid war's alarms,
Our martial glory needs your firm support;
Or when, in peaceful session of the senate,
The welfare of the State demands your voice,
I will rely on your experience.
But in a matter that concerns my heart
'Tis otherwise, and I should have some scruple
In bringing your grave judgment to such trifles.
Farewell. I'm ill at ease away from Junia.

Scene 2.

BURRUS.

Nero at last shows his true character.
Burrus, that fierceness which you thought to tame
Is ready to break loose from your weak bonds,
And, like a swollen river, spread destruction !
How shall I act in this unhappy hour ?
Seneca's counsels may not soothe my cares ;
Afar from Rome, he knows not of this danger.
Ah, if I could but touch the mother's feeling
Of tenderness—She comes : good fortune brings her.

Scene 3.

AGRIPPINA, BURRUS, ALBINA.

AGRIPPINA.

Well, Burrus, was I wrong in my suspicions ?
You have impress'd fine lessons on your pupil !
Pallas is banish'd, for the crime, perchance,
Of having raised your master to the purple.
You know full well that never but for him
Would Claudius, whom he sway'd, have father'd Nero.
You foist a rival in Octavia's place,
And set my son free from his nuptial oath :
Fit task for one, sworn foe to flatterers,
Chosen to curb the wild career of youth,
Thus to turn flatterer himself, and teach
How he may pour contempt on wife and mother !

BURRUS.

Madam, you have no cause yet to accuse me ;
This act of Cæsar's may be justified,
Pallas has well deserved his banishment,
Meet recompense for pride too long endured.
The Emperor has only, with regret,

Fulfill'd the secret wishes of his Court.
The evil that remains admits of cure,
Octavia's tears may at their source be dried.
But calm your rage, there is a milder method
That sooner will recall him to her arms,
While threats and angry words will make him wilder.

AGRIPPINA.

Ah, you will try in vain to stop my mouth.
I see my silence but provokes your scorn;
My handiwork has had too much respect.
All Agrippina's props fall not with Pallas;
The gods have left enough t' avenge my ruin.
The son of Claudius begins to feel
His wrongs, for which not I alone am guilty.
I'll show him to the army, doubt it not,
Complain before them of his young life blasted,
And make them, like myself, repair their error.
On one side shall they see an emperor's son
Reclaim a faith sworn to his family,
And hear a daughter of Germanicus;
Ahenobarbus' son, on th' other hand,
With his supporters, Seneca and Burrus,
By me recall'd from exile, both of them,
Who share the sovereign pow'r before my eyes.
I will take care they know our common crimes,
And by what paths I have conducted him.
To make his sway and yours detestable,
I will avow the most injurious rumours:
All shall be told, exiles, assassinations,
Poison itself,—

BURRUS

Madam, they'll not believe you.
They'll not be caught by your deceitful wiles,
But know 'tis pique that prompts self-accusation.
As to myself, who first advanced your plots,
And made the troops swear fealty to Nero,
My zealous efforts cause me no repentance.
A son succeeded to his father, Madam
For, in adopting Nero, Claudius chose

To give his son and yours an equal footing.
Rome's choice has been for Nero. So she took
Tiberius, adopted by Augustus,
Nor wrong'd the young Agrippa, his own grandson,
Who claim'd in vain to wield th' imperial sceptre,
His pow'r, establish'd upon such foundations,
Cannot be weaken'd by yourself to-day;
And, if he heeds me still, his bounty, Madam,
Will soon remove the wish to injure him.
I have begun the work, and will complete it.

Scene 4.

AGRIPPINA, ALBINA.

ALBINA.

In what a sea of passion grief has plunged you!
And can it be that Cæsar knows not of it!

AGRIPPINA.

Ah, should he venture in my sight himself,—

ALBINA.

Madam, in Heaven's name, conceal this choler.
Let not your zeal for sister or for brother
Destroy your peace for ever! Must you check
The Emperor even in his love affairs?

AGRIPPINA.

Ah, see you not how they would humble me,
Albina? 'Tis to me they give a rival:
Soon, if I break not this ill-omen'd tie,
My place is occupied, and I am nothing.
Octavia has enjoy'd but hitherto
An empty title, by the Court ignored
As useless, and to me the eyes of all
Have look'd for profit. Now another love
Has cast out mine; she, as his wife and mistress.

Will reign alone, and in the pomp of pow'r
Reap the rich fruit of all my pains, as meed
Of one kind look! Already I'm forsaken—
I cannot, dear Albina, bear the thought.
E'en tho' I hasten the disastrous sentence
Of Heav'n, ungrateful Nero—

Lo! His rival!

Scene 5.

BRITANNICUS, AGRIPPINA, NARCISSUS, ALBINA.

BRITANNICUS.

Our common foes are not invincible;
And there are hearts can feel for our misfortunes.
Your friends and mine, so silent hitherto,
While we were losing time in vain regrets,
Fired with the anger which injustice kindles,
Have made their grievance known to good Narcissus.
Not yet has Nero undisturb'd possession
Of her whose conquest means my sister's shame.
If still her wrongs can move you, he, tho' faithless,
May be brought back to tread the path of duty.
Sure we have half the senate on our side:
Sylla and Piso, Plautus,—

AGRIPPINA.

Prince, what say you?
You name the highest nobles of the State.

BRITANNICUS.

Madam, I see my words have wounded you,
And that your wrath, trembling irresolute,
Already fears to gain all it has wish'd for.
Nay, my disgrace has taken root too firmly;
You need not dread what any friend of mine
May venture; I have lost them all; your prudence
Has scatter'd them, or long ago seduced them.

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AGRIPPINA?

Trust your suspicions less; our safety, Sir,
Depends upon our mutual understanding.
Rely upon my word. Despite your foes,
I will be true to all that I have promised.
Nero is guilty, and in vain he shuns me;
Sooner, or later he must hear his mother.
Force and persuasion I will try by turns,
Or, if I fail, leading your sister with me,
I'll spread abroad my dread and her alarms,
And make all hearts responsive to her tears.
Farewell. On all sides I will ply th' attack;
And you, take my advice, avoid his presence.

Scene 6.

BRITANNICUS, NARCISSUS.

BRITANNICUS.

Have you not flatter'd me with hopes fallacious?
Or can I place reliance on your statement?

NARCISSUS.

You may, my prince; but this is not the place
Wherein this mystery must be unfolded.
Let us go forth. What wait you for?

BRITANNICUS.

I? Wait for?

Alas!

NARCISSUS.

Explain yourself.

BRITANNICUS.

If scheme of yours
Could get me sight of her again,—

NARCISSUS.

Of whom ?

BRITANNICUS.

My weakness makes me blush. But then more firmly
I should meet fate.

NARCISSUS.

What, after all my words,
Deem you her true ?

BRITANNICUS.

No, I believe her false,
Deserving hot reproach ; and yet despite •
Myself, less than I ought do I believe it.
My stubborn heart condones her fickleness,
Finds reason for excuse, and still adores her.
Would I could crush my incredulity ;
Would I could hate her with a mind at ease !
Yet who'd believe a heart that seem'd so noble,
Foe of a faithless Court from infancy,
Could so forget its glory, and at once
Hatch perfidy too base for courtiers.

NARCISSUS.

Who knows if, in her long retreat, the wretch
Kept not the Emperor's conquest in her eye ?
Sure that her beauty could not be conceal'd,
Perhaps she fled that she might be pursued,
Inciting Nero to the hard earn'd glory
Of quelling pride till then invincible.

BRITANNICUS.

May I not see her, then ?

NARCISSUS.

Sir, at this moment
She listens to the voice of her new lover.

BRITANNICUS.

Well, let us go.

But whom do I behold?

'Tis she.

NARCISSUS (*aside*).

Great gods! Cæsar must hear of this.

Scene 7.

BRITANNICUS, JUNIA.

JUNIA.

Fly, Sir, nor face a wrath that burns against you,
Inflamed by my determined resolution.
Nero is anger'd. I have just escaped,
While Agrippina labours to detain him.
Farewell. Wrong not my love, but look to see
The happy day when I shall be absolved
From blame. Your image in my soul shall dwell
For aye, and nought shall banish it.

BRITANNICUS.

I know
Your purpose, Madam: you would have me fly,
To leave you free t' indulge your new desire.
While I am here, no doubt a secret shame
Somewhat disturbs the relish of enjoyment.
Yes, I must go!

JUNIA.

Impute not, Sir, to me—

BRITANNICUS.

You might have held the field a little longer.
I murmur not that your affection's fickle,
And that you join the side which Fortune favours;
That you are dazzled with imperial splendour,
And, at my sister's cost, would fain enjoy it;

But rather that, beguiled like others now,
You should have seem'd untouch'd by its deceits
So long. Despair has seized me, I confess it,
This was the only ill I never thought
To cope with. On my ruin I have seen
Injustice flourish, Heav'n itself accomplice
Of my oppressors, but such horrors have not
Drain'd its full cup of wrath; there yet remain'd
To be by you forgotten.

JUNIA.

Happier moments
Might urge my just impatience to resent
Distrust; but Nero threatens, danger presses,
And I have other thoughts than to distress you.
Go, reassure your heart, and cease complaints;
Nero, who heard our words, bade me dissemble.

BRITANNICUS

Ah, cruel—

JUNIA.

Witness of our interview,
With eye severe he scann'd my countenance,
Ready to make his vengeance burst on you
If but a gesture should betray our secret.

BRITANNICUS.

Nero was list'ning? Yet your eyes, the while,
Might have look'd cold, without deceiving me;
They might have told me who imposed their rigour!
Love is not dumb, the language of the heart
Is varied. One glance might have saved me woe
Intense. There needed—

JUNIA.

There was need of silence
To save you. Ah, how often was my heart
About to tell you its perplexity!
How many rising sighs did I suppress,

Afraid to meet the eyes I yearn'd to look on!
 Silence is torture when a loved one grieves,
 When to his groans we must ourselves contribute,
 Knowing we might console him by a look!
 Yet would such look have caused more bitter tears!
 At that remembrance anxious and disturb'd,
 I felt my feigning lack'd reality;
 I fear'd the pallor of my quivering cheek,
 My eye, too plainly full of my distress;
 I fear'd each instant Nero in his wrath
 Was coming to upbraid my want of rigour,
 For vain seem'd all my efforts to keep down
 The love I almost wish'd I ne'er had known,
 Alas, for his own peace of mind and ours
 Too clearly has he read your heart and mine!
 Once more, go hence, and hide you from his sight.
 At fitter season all shall be explain'd,
 A thousand other secrets be discover'd.

BRITANNICUS.

Too much already, more than I can bear!
 How guilty I have been, and you how kind!
 And know you all that you forsake for me?
(Throwing himself at JUNIA'S feet.)
 When may I at your feet blot out th' offence?

JUNIA.

What are you doing? Look, your rival comes!

Scene 8.

NERO, BRITANNICUS, JUNIA.

NERO.

Prince, do not interrupt such charming transports.
 Madam, his thanks show you are wondrous kind:
 I have surprised him at your knees, to me
 Some gratitude is surely due as well,

He finds this place convenient, where I keep you
In readiness for interviews so sweet.

BRITANNICUS.

I can my joy or sorrow lay before her
Where'er her kindness grants me audience ;
Nor has this place where you think fit to keep her
Aught that can overawe Britannicus.

NERO.

What, see you nothing that can warn a subject
To hold my pow'r respected, and obey me ?

BRITANNICUS.

This palace saw us not brought up together,
Me, to obey you, you, to taunt my weakness.
The fortune of our birth ne'er made it likely
That I should own a master in Domitius.

NERO.

Our wishes have been cross'd by destiny,
Once I obey'd, and now your turn is come.
If yet you have not learn'd so hard a lesson,
That shows you're still a boy, and must be taught it.

BRITANNICUS.

And who will teach me ?

NERO.

Rome, and all her empire.

BRITANNICUS.

Does Rome among your high prerogatives
Count cruelty and violent injustice,
Unfair imprisonment, rape, and divorce ?

NERO.

Rome prys not with too curious regard
Into the secrets that I choose to hide ;
Copy her prudence.

BRITANNICUS.

What she thinks, we know.

NERO.

At least she holds her tongue; do you the same.

BRITANNICUS.

Thus then has Nero ceased to curb his passions!

NERO.

Nero has ceased to care to hear you longer.

BRITANNICUS.

All hearts should bless his reign for happiness.

NERO.

Happy or wretched, 'tis enough they fear me.

BRITANNICUS.

I know not Junia, or such sentiments
Would scarce be likely to win praise from her.

NERO.

If I am little skill'd how best to please her,
I can at least punish a saucy rival.

BRITANNICUS.

Whatever dangers threaten to o'erwhelm me,
I fear to lose her love, and that alone.

NERO.

'Twere better wish'd for. I can say no more.

BRITANNICUS.

My sole ambition is t' enjoy her favour.

NERO.

And she has pledged that favour yours for ever.

BRITANNICUS.

At least I have not learn'd to play the spy
Upon her words, but let her praise or blame me
Unwatch'd, nor hide myself to shut her mouth.

NERO.

I see. Ho, guards, there!

JUNIA.

What then, will you do?

Pardon the jealous love of one so near
Akin. A thousand miseries he suffers;
Can his rare happiness excite your envy?
Suffer me, Sire, to knit your hearts together,
And hide me from the eyes of both of you.
My absence then will heal your fatal discords,
And I will join the ranks of Vesta's virgins.
Let not my vows be longer ground of strife
Between you; let them trouble Heav'n alone.

NERO.

This project is as strange as it is sudden.
Let her be taken, guards, to her apartments;
And with his sister keep Britannicus.

BRITANNICUS.

'Tis thus that Nero woos a woman's heart!

JUNIA.

Do not provoke him, Prince; bend to this storm.

NERO.

Guards, do my bidding, and delay no longer.

Scene 9.

NERO, BURRUS.

BURRUS.

Ye gods! What do I see?

NERO (*without seeing BURRUS*).

Thus fiercer glow
Their fires. I know what hand arranged their meeting:
'Twas but for this that Agrippina sought me,
And all her long protracted lecture tended
Only to further this vile scheme of hers.

(Perceiving BURRUS.)

Acquaint me if my mother still is here.
I would retain her, Burrus, in the palace:
And let my bodyguard relieve her own.

BURRUS.

Your mother, Sire? Will you not hear her?

NERO.

Stop!

I know not, Burrus, what you may be plotting,
But all my wishes have for some days past
Found you a censor ready to oppose them.
Answer for her, or else, if you refuse,
Others shall answer both for her and Burrus.

ACT IV.

Scene 1.

AGRIPPINA, BURRUS.

BURRUS.

Ay, Madam, you may clear yourself at leisure,
Cæsar consents to give you audience here.
If his command restricts you to the palace,
His purpose, maybe, is to talk with you;
In any case, if I may speak my thought,
Forget that he has given you offence;
Be ready rather to receive him back
With open arms; defend yourself, and blame not
His conduct. See how all the Court observe him,
And him alone. Tho' he may be your son,
And owe you all, he is your emperor.
Like us, you're subject to the pow'r you gave.
Whether he threaten or caress you, Madam,
The Court will either shun or press around you,
'Tis his support they seek in seeking yours.
But, look, the Emperor comes.

AGRIPPINA.

Leave me with him.

Scene 2.

NERO, AGRIPPINA.

AGRIPPINA (*seating herself*).

Come hither, Nero, take your place beside me:
'Tis wish'd that I should clear your wrong suspicions.
I know not with what crime I have been slander'd;
All I have done admits of explanation.

You sway Earth's sceptre now; and yet you know
How far your birth removed you from such greatness.
My ancestors, whom Rome has deified,
Bestow'd a slender title without me.
When Messalina's doom open'd a field
Of competition for the couch of Claudius,
'Mid all the fair aspirants to his choice
Who begg'd the intercession of his freedmen,
I wish'd to win, with this sole thought, that I
Might give the throne, where I should sit, to you.
My pride I humbled to solicit Pallas;
His master, daily in my arms caress'd,
By slow degrees drew from his niece's eyes
The love to which I sought to lead his feelings.
But that close tie of kindred blood between us
Debarr'd incestuous union, nor did Claudius
Dare to espouse the daughter of his brother.
Th' obsequious senate by a law less strict
Placed Claudius in my arms, Rome at my feet.
Thus much I gain'd, but nothing yet for you.
Into his family I introduced you
Close on my steps, made you his son in law,
Gave you his daughter, whom Silanus loved,
And he, forsaken, with his life blood mark'd
That fatal day. But nothing yet was done:
Claudius would still prefer his son to you.
I begg'd the aid of Pallas once again,
And so prevail'd on Claudius to adopt you.
He call'd you Nero, and, before the time,
Desired that you should share the sovereign pow'r.
To all men then, as they recall'd the past,
My scheme, already too matured, lay bare.
His father's friends, true to Britannicus,
Murmur'd against his imminent disgrace.
The eyes of some with promises I dazzled,
Exile released me from the most seditious.
Claudius himself, weary of my complaints
Unceasing, took his son out of the care
Of those whose zeal, long constant to his cause,
Might yet prevail to set him on the throne.
Farther, I chose among my following

Those who I wish'd should have him in their charge :
Such, on the other hand, I named to be
Your governors, whom Rome held most respected ;
Deaf to intrigues, I trusted fame's clear voice,
Recall'd from exile Seneca, and took
From martial service Burrus, those same men
Who since — Rome then esteem'd them for their virtues.
Meanwhile I drew on the imperial chest
For lavish largess, in your name bestow'd ;
Presents, and shows, invincible attractions,
Gain'd you the people's hearts, and won the army,
Which, re-awakening to its first affections,
Favour'd in you my sire Germanicus.
Claudius grew feebler as the time pass'd on :
His eyes, long seal'd, were open'd at the last :
He knew his error, and in fear let fall
Some words of sorrow for his son, too late
He would have gather'd all his friends around him :
The guards, the palace, and the royal bed
Were under my control : I let his fondness
Be wasted in vain sighs, and kept close watch
On his last hours : feigning to spare him pain,
I hid his son's tears from the dying monarch.
He died. A thousand shameful rumours spreading,
I quickly stopp'd the tidings of his death :
And, while in secret Burrus was despatch'd
To make the army swear to you allegiance,
And you were marching to the camp, as I
Arranged, in Rome the smoke of sacrifice
Rose from her altars ; and, deceived by me,
The anxious people pray'd that he might live,
When Claudius was no more. Your pow'r establish'd
On the obedience sworn by all the legions,
At length I show'd the corpse, and Rome, astonish'd
At what had happen'd, learn'd that he was dead
And Nero reign'd. This is the true confession
I wish'd to make. Thus have I sinn'd, and this
Is my reward. Now that you reap the fruit
Of all my pains, grateful for scarce six months,
You feel the burden of respect too irksome,
And do not care to recognize me more.

Burrus and Seneca have taught you how
To be ungrateful, sharp'ning your suspicions,
And overjoy'd to find a pupil fitter
To be their teacher. Gay gallants I see,
Like young Senecio and Otho, share
Your confidence, and pander to your pleasures :
And when, displeased at your disdainful treatment,
I have inquired the reason of such insults,
Unable to withstand my just complaints,
You have replied with ever fresh affronts.
Just now I promised Junia to your brother,
And both felt flatter'd at your mother's choice,
When, to your palace secretly convey'd,
One night makes Junia mistress of your heart,
From which I see Octavia has been banish'd ;
And soon, I went the nuptial bond I tied
Will be dissolved ; Britannicus arrested,
Pallas an exile, I await the fetters
In store for me ; for Burrus dares to act
The gaoler. When you find your guile unmask'd,
Instead of seeking me to beg forgiveness,
You order me to justify myself.

NERO.

I ne'er forget that 'tis to you I owe
The throne, nor need you trouble to repeat it ;
Your kindness, Madam, may at peace repose
On Nêro's gratitude. Besides these murmurs,
That breathe dissatisfaction and suspicion,
Have made all those who hear your plaints believe
That hitherto (this in your private ear),
You have in my name toil'd but for yourself.
"Such honours," say they, "such respectful homage,
Are these return too mean for her acceptance ?
What is the crime for which she blames her son ?
Was't only to obey her that she crown'd him ?
Holds he the sceptre as her deputy ?"
And yet, if I could thus have satisfied you,
I would have gladly yielded you that pow'r
Which you so loudly claim to reassume ;

But Rome will have a master, not a mistress.
You know the uproar that my weakness raised,
The ferment of the senate and the people,
Hearing your will dictated thro' my lips;
How they declared that Claudius had bequeath'd
To me his tame submission with his throne.
A hundred times you've seen the indignation
With which our troops have before you paraded
Their eagles, shamed so to disgrace the heroes
Whose effigies are stamp'd upon them still.
No other woman would have braved their scorn;
But you, unless you reign, ne'er cease complaining.
Leagued with Britannicus, the match you purposed
'Tween him and Junia was design'd to strengthen
Him against me, and Pallas hatch'd the plot.
When, to my sore regret, I take such measures
As may secure my peace, your rage and hatred
Burst forth; you'll show my rival to the army,
Already has the rumour reach'd the camp.

AGRIPPINA.

I! make him emperor! Will you believe it?
What motive could I have, what end be gain'd?
What honours might I look for in his Court?
If malice spares me not while you are sovereign,
If my accusers closely dog my steps,
And venture to attack the Emp'ror's mother,
How should I fare amid a Court of strangers?
They would reproach me not with feeble murmurs,
With schemes condemn'd to failure at their birth,
But crimes wrought in your presence, for your sake,
And, all too soon, convict me of my guilt.
You cannot baffle me with your evasions,
You are ungrateful, and have always been so:
E'en from your earliest years my tender care
Has but extorted from you feign'd affection.
Nought has avail'd to win you, and your hardness
Ought to have stopp'd the channels of my heart.
What misery is mine! Must all my fondness
Be found a burden by my only son!

Ye gods, who hear my sorrowing words this day,
Have not my vows and pray'rs been all for him?
Fears, perils, and remorse have check'd me not,
No scorn subdued me; and I turn'd mine eyes
From all calamities that were predicted.
I've done my best; you reign, and I'm content.
Now, if you wish it, with the liberty
Of which I have been robb'd, take life as well,
Provided that the people, in their rage,
Deprive you not of what has cost me dear.

NERO.

Speak, then. What is it you would have me do?

AGRIPPINA.

Punish the insolence of mine accusers;
Calm the resentment of Britannicus;
Let Junia have the partner of her choice;
Let both be free, and Pallas stay at Rome;
And suffer me to see you when I will;
(*Perceiving BURRUS at the back of the stage.*)
Lastly, let Burrus, who is come to hear us,
No longer dare detain me at your door.

NERO.

Yes, Madam, I desire my gratitude
May henceforth stamp your pow'r on ev'ry heart;
And I already bless that happy frost
Which makes the fire of our affection brighter.
What Pallas may have done shall be forgotten,
My quarrel with Britannicus is over;
And as to what has most divided us,
My passion shall be subject to your judgment.
Go then, and tell my brother what will please him.
Guards, let my mother's orders be obey'd.

Scene 3.

NERO, BURRUS.

BURRUS.

With what delight did I behold, my lord,
Embraces that must bring back peace between you !
You know if e'er my voice was raised against her,
Or labour'd to estrange you from her love,
Or if I merit her unjust resentment.

NERO.

I tell you plainly, Burrus, that I thought
One common understanding made you both
Traitors. But now her enmity restores you
My confidence. She grasps too hastily
At triumph. If my rival I embrace,
It is to crush him.

BURRUS.

Sire ?

NERO.

Enough : his ruin
Must set me free from Agrippina's fury ;
For while he breathes I have but half a life.
Mine ears are weary of his hateful name,
Nor will I suffer her audacity
To promise him my throne a second time.

BURRUS.

Must she soon weep then for Britannicus ?

NERO.

Ere sunset I shall fear the boy no more.

BURRUS.

What motive is it that inspires this purpose ?

NERO. c

Honour and love, my safety, and my life.

BURRUS.

Nay, tell me what you will, this foul design
Was never, Sire, conceived in your own breast.

NERO.

Burrus!

BURRUS.

To learn it from your lips confounds me!
Heav'ns! Did not you yourself shudder to hear it?
Think you what blood you are about to spik?
Is Nero tired of reigning in all hearts?
What will men say of you? Consider that.

NERO.

Why, bound for ever to a blameless past,
Must I observe the shifting breeze of favour,
The gift of chance, nor certain for a day?
Slave to their will, that thwarts my own desires,
Am I their monarch but to do their pleasure?

BURRUS.

And is it then no satisfaction, Sire,
That to your hand Rome owes her happiness?
You still are master, 'tis for you to choose.
You have been good, and you may yet remain so:
The way is well mark'd out, no obstacle
Forbids your steps to tread fresh heights of virtue.
But should you heed the voice of flattery,
Then will you have to rush from crime to crime,
Support your harshness by new cruelties,
And wade thro' ever-rising streams of blood.
The prince's death will rouse the fiery zeal
Of all his friends, impatient to take up
His quarrel, that shall fresh supporters find
To follow them when his avengers perish;
The flame you kindle shall be ne'er extinguish'd.
Tho' fear'd by all the world, you must yourself

Fear all, and, trembling as you strike unceasing,
Count ev'ry subject as an enemy.

Ah! does th' experience of your earliest years
Cause you to hate your youthful innocence?
Think you what happiness has mark'd their course?
Good gods! How tranquilly they glided by!
What joy to think, and say within yourself:
"All at this moment bless me ev'rywhere,
And love me; no one shudders at my name;
No tearful eyes are turn'd to Heav'n for me,
No looks of sullen hatred shun my presence,
But all hearts fly to meet me as I pass!"
Such thoughts once pleased you. O ye gods, what change!
The vilest blood was precious in your sight:
One day I well remember, when the Senate
Press'd you to sign a criminal's death doom,
You long opposed their just severity;
It seem'd too cruel to your tender heart,
And, troubled at the burden of a Crown,
You said:—"I would I knew not how to write."
No, be persuaded, or my death shall spare me
The sight and sorrow of a blow like this:
I cannot live, Sire, to survive your glory:
If you are bent upon so black a deed,

(throwing himself at NERO's feet)

Lo! I am ready; strike, ere you begin,
This heart that cannot to such crimes consent:
Send for those cruel men who so mislead you,
And let them try their faltering hand on me—

But I can see my tears have touch'd my master,
Your virtuous soul shrinks from their bloody counsels.
Oh! lose no time, tell me the traitors' names
Who dare to prompt you to such villanies;
Summon your brother; in his arms forget—

NERO.

You know not what you ask.

BURRUS.

He hates you not;
He is traduced, I know him innocent;

I'll answer for his loyalty, my liege.
I with all speed will hasten this glad meeting

NERO.

Bring him to my apartments. There await me.

Scene 4.

NERO, NARCISSUS

NARCISSUS.

All is provided for so just a death ;
I have the poison ready. Famed Locusta
Has exercised for me her utmost skill :
She kill'd a slave before my very eyes ;
A dagger cannot make so quick an end
As this new poison she has giv'n to me.

NERO.

Enough, Narcissus : for these pains I thank you,
But do not wish you to extend them further.

NARCISSUS.

What ! Is your hatred for Britannicus
So slack that you forbid—

NERO.

Yes, we are friends.

NARCISSUS.

Far be it from me to dissuade you, Sire.
But he so lately found himself in prison,
That this offence will rankle in his heart.
No secrets are there time does not reveal ;
He'll know my hand was to have offer'd him
Poison prepared for him by your command.
May Heav'n divert his mind from such a purpose,
But he, perchance, will do the deed you dare not.

• NERO.

They answer for his heart; I'll conq

NARCISSUS.

And Julia's marriage, does that seal
Are you to make this sacrifice for him?

• NERO.

You take too much concern. Be't as it may,
He is no longer enemy of mine.

NARCISSUS.

Your mother reckon'd upon this, my lord;
And she once more submits your will to hers.

NERO.

What mean you, sirrah? Tell me what she says.

NARCISSUS.

She boasts of it, and publicly enough.

NERO.

Of what?

NARCISSUS.

That she had but to see you, Sire,
One moment, and to all this vehemence
And anger modest silence would succeed;
That you would be the first to give assent
To peace, rejoiced that she should deign to pardon
What's past.

NERO.

Narcissus, tell me how to act.
Glad would I be to punish her presumption;
And, if I had my wish, this foolish triumph
Should soon be follow'd by regret eternal.
But what will all the world say then of me?
Would'st have me follow in the steps of tyrants?
Shall Rome, all honourable titles cancell'd,

Leave me no other name than poisoner?
Such vengeance they would count a parricide.

NARCISSUS.

Did you expect they 'ld always hold their tongues?
Is it for you to heed their idle words?
Shall your own wishes fade from your remembrance?
And will you dare to thwart none but yourself?
But you, my lord, know not what Romans are;
They keep a better bridle on their tongue.
This caution is but weakness in a monarch:
They'll think that they deserve it, if you fear them.
They have been long accusom'd to the yoke,
And lick the hand that rivets fast their fetters.
You'll find them ever eager to content you:
Tiberius wearied of such cringing subjects.
Myself, invested with a borrow'd pow'r,
Which, with my freedom, I received from Claudius,
A hundred times, during my day of glory,
Tried hard their patience, but it never fail'd.
Fear you the odium of a cup of poison?
Destroy the brother, and desert the sister;
Rome on her altars will not spare the victims,
Nor fail to find them guilty, were they pure
From all offence; their birthdays you will see
Rank'd among luckless anniversaries.

NERO.

I tell you once again, I cannot do it.
I've promised Burrus, being forced to yield:
Nor do I wish to break my word, and give
His virtue arms that he may use against me.
My courage fell before his arguments,
Nor could I listen calmly as he spoke.

NARCISSUS.

Believe me, Burrus thinks not as he speaks,
His virtue shrewdly backs his interest,
Or rather they all work with one intent:
This stroke, they see, would shatter all their pow'r;

You would be free, my lord, and at your feet
Your masters then would bow their heads like us.
What! Know you not all that they dare to say?
"Nero, forsooth, was never born to rule.
His words and deeds are such as we prescribe;
Burru directs his heart, and Seneca
His mind. The sole ambition that he knows
Is to be skilful in the chariot race,
To gain the prize in meanest competitions,
To show himself in public to the Romans,
To let his voice be heard upon the stage,
And win their admiration with his songs,
While ever and anon his soldiers force
The loud applause that greets each fresh performance."
Ah! will you not compel them to be silent?

NERO.

Narcissus, let's go see what we should do.

ACT V.

Scene 1.

BRITANNICUS, JUNIA.

BRITANNICUS.

Yes, Junia; Nero waits me in his hall,
However strange it seems, to make me welcome.
There all the youth at Court have been invited,
And there 'mid festal pomp and mirth he wills
Our mutual oaths should in their sight be seal'd,
And love revived with brotherly embraces.
His passion for yourself, source of our hatred,
He quenches, and makes you over his fate
Sole arbitress. Tho' banish'd from the rank
My fathers held, tho' in their spoils he decks him
Before my eyes, yet, ceasing to oppose
Our love, he yields me the delight of pleasing

You, and my heart in secret pardons him,
And gives up all the rest with small regret.
No longer shall I live apart from you !
This moment I can see without alarm
Those eyes which neither grief nor terror moved,
Which have for me refused th' imperial throne !
But what new fear, dear lady, thus constrains
Your hearts' participation in my joy ?
How is 'it, while you hear me, your sad eyes
Cast lingering looks towards the sky above us ?
What is it that you dread ?

JUNIA.

I scarcely know :

But I'm afraid.

BRITANNICUS.

You love me ?

JUNIA.

Can you ask it ?

BRITANNICUS.

Nero no longer mars our happiness.

JUNIA.

But can you guarantee me his good faith ?

BRITANNICUS.

What ! you suspect him of a secret hatred ?

JUNIA.

Just now did Nero love me, swore to slay you ;
Me he avoids, seeks you ; can change so great
Be but a moment's work ?

BRITANNICUS.

A master-stroke

Of Agrippina's in this work I see :

She thought my death would bring her ruin with it,

Thanks to the foresight of her jealous spirit,
Our bitterest enemies have fought for us.
My trust is in the passions she display'd,
In Burrus, in the Emperor himself;
I trust, like me, incapable of treason,
He hates with open heart, or hates no longer.

JUNIA.

Nay, judge not, Sir, his feelings by your own;
The course you follow is not that of Nero;
His Court and him I've known but for a day.
But here, alas, if I dare own the truth,
How different is their speech from what they think
How little do the heart and tongue agree!
How lightly here are promises belied!
How strange are all their ways to you and me!

BRITANNICUS.

But, be their friendship true or false, if you
Fear Nero, is he without fear himself?
No, no; he will not by so base a crime
Dare to arouse the people and the senate
Against himself. He own'd his latest wrong;
He show'd remorse even before Narcissus.
Ah! my dear princess, had he told you how—

JUNIA.

But are you sure Narcissus is no traitor?

BRITANNICUS.

Why would you have me doubt him?

JUNIA.

Nay, I know:
But 'tis your life that is at stake, my prince,
And I read treachery in every eye;
Nero I fear, and fear the dark misfortunes
That dog my steps. Prescient, against my will,
Of woe, with fond regret I see you leave me.
Ah! if this peace, wherewith you feed your hopes,

Should hide some secret snare against your life;
 If Nero, by our mutual love provoked,
 Has chosen night's deep shadows to conceal
 His vengeance, and makes ready, while I see you,
 To strike; if I should ne'er behold you more!
 My prince!

BRITANNICUS.

Dear Junia! Do I see you weep?
 Are my concerns of such account to you?
 To-day, when Nero, swelling in his pride,
 Thought to bewitch your eyes with royal splendour,
 Here, where all shun me and pay court to him,
 Can you prefer my woes to all his pomp?
 On this same day, and in his very palace,
 Refuse a throne, and weep, my love, for me?
 But dry those precious tears; soon my return
 Will dissipate alarms. Longer delay
 May wake suspicions. Fare you well. I go,
 My heart is full of tender thoughts of you;
 Amidst the mirth of young eyes that are blind
 To what I see, on you I'll fondly gaze,
 And hold sweet converse.

JUNIA.

Prince—

BRITANNICUS.

And I must go.

They wait my coming.

JUNIA.

At least stay till you're sent for.

Scene 2.

BRITANNICUS, AGRIPPINA, JUNIA.

AGRIPPINA.

Why tarry, Prince? Go quickly; Nero sits
Impatiently complaining of your absence,
The joy of all the guests, still incomplete,
Waits to burst forth till you embrace each other.
Let not so flattering a wish grow cool:
Depart. And we will find Octavia, Madam.

BRITANNICUS.

Go, my fair Junia; with your mind at ease,
Hasten, and greet her warmly; she expects you.
As soon as I can do so, I will join you,
And give you thanks, Madam, for all your kindness.

Scene 3.

AGRIPPINA, JUNIA.

AGRIPPINA.

Madam, if I mistake not, you have shed
Some parting tears, with which your eyes are dim.
Tell me what cloud has troubled your calm sky?
Doubt you the peace my pains have now secured?

JUNIA.

After so many griefs this day has cost me,
I cannot still my agitated heart.
Scarce can I yet believe this miracle:
And, should I fear your goodness may be thwarted,
Forgive me, for I know the Court is fickle,
And some alarm always consorts with love.

AGRIPPINA

I've said enough. The aspect of affairs
Is alter'd, and my cares leave you no ground
To doubt it. I will answer for this peace;
Nero has sworn to me with surest pledges.
I would that you had witness'd the endearments
With which he seal'd anew his solemn promise!
With what affection he just now detain'd me,
And kept his arms around me ere we parted!
His ready kindness, written on his features,
At first to lighter matters condescended;
With filial frankness, all his pride forgetting,
Into his mother's heart pour'd forth his feelings:
But soon resuming a severer manner,
As of an emperor who consults his mother,
Without reserve he trusted me with secrets
Whereon the fortune of mankind depends.
No, I must here confess it to his honour
He harbours now no taint of dark resentment;
Our enemies alone warp'd his good nature,
And gain'd his ear to bias him against us.
But in its turn their influence is waning;
Rome soon shall recognize my pow'r once more,
And gladly hails the end of my disfavour.
Meanwhile we must not tarry here till night,
But with Octavia close this happy day
I deem'd so fatal.

But what strikes mine ears?
Uproar and tumult! What can they be doing?

JUNIA

O gracious Heaven, save Britannicus!

• *Scene 4.*

AGRIPPINA, JUNIA, BURRUS.

AGRIPPINA.

Whither away so fast? Stop, Burrus, tell me —

• BURRUS.

Madam, 'tis done, Britannicus is dying.

JUNIA.

Alas! my prince!

AGRIPPINA.

Dying?

BURRUS.

Or rather, Madam,

* Already dead.

JUNIA.

Pardon this agony.
I go to succour, or to follow him.*Scene 5.*

AGRIPPINA, BURRUS.

•
AGRIPPINA

O Burrus, what a crime!

BURRUS.

I'll not survive it.
I needs must quit the Emperor and his Court.

AGRIPPINA.

What! Quail'd he not to shed his brother's blood?

BUREUS.

More secretly he compass'd his design.
Scarce did the Emperor see his brother come,
When from his knees he raised him, and embraced him,
And, while all stood in silence, seized a cup :
"To crown this day," said he, "with better welcome,
I pour the first drops forth as my libation ;
Ye gods, to whom I thus appeal, be present
To favour now our reconciliation." °
By the same oaths the young prince binds himself.
The cup, still in his hand, is by Narcissus
Refill'd : but, as he touch'd it with his lips,
No sword-thrust ever caused effect so potent ;
His eyes grew dim, their vital fire had vanish'd,
Lifeless and cold upon his couch he fell.
Think how this blow struck every trembling heart :
Half of the guests with cries of fear rushed out :
But those whose knowledge of the Court was longer
Conform'd their countenance to Cæsar's looks,
Which show'd no sign of wonder, as he lay
Still on his couch :—"This malady," said he,
"Of which you fear the violence, has oftentimes
Attack'd his childhood, and is free from danger."
Narcissus tried in vain to seem concern'd,
His treacherous joy betray'd itself too well.
Let Nero, if he will, punish my boldness,
I, passing thro' the crowd, left his vile Court ;
And, overwhelm'd with grief at this foul murder,
Mourn for the prince, for Cæsar, and for Rome.

AGRIFFINA.

He comes. Now you shall see if I inspired him.

Scene 6.

NERO, AGRIPPINA, BURRUS, NARCISSUS.

NERO (*seeing AGRIPPINA*).

Great gods!

AGRIPPINA.

Stop, Nero; I must speak to you
A word or two: Britannicus is dead,
I know the hand that murder'd him.

NERO.

Who, Madam?

AGRIPPINA.

You.

NERO.

I? See how suspicion works upon you!
No evil happens but you hold me guilty;
And, if one chose to heed your reckless words,
'Twas I who cut the life of Claudius short.
You loved his son, his death may turn your brain;
But for the strokes of fate I cannot answer.

AGRIPPINA.

No, no; Britannicus has died of poison;
Narcissus did the deed, at your command.

NERO.

Madam!—Who dares to tell you it was so?

NARCISSUS.

Does this suspicion wrong you, Sire, so much?
Madam, Britannicus had secret projects
Which, carried out, would with good cause have grieved
you;
His aim was higher than a match with Junia;
You would have suffer'd deeply for your kindness.

Much he deceived you, meaning, soon or late,
To take full vengeance for his cherish'd wrongs.
If fate has help'd you in your own despite,
Or Cæsar, with his knowledge of the plots
Against your life, trusted my faithful service,
Leave tears, my lady, to your enemies ;
And let them number this calamity
With those they deem their worst : but you—

AGRIPPINA.

Go on :

Such ministers will win a glorious name
For Nero. You have gone too far already
Now to draw back. First with your brother's blood
Beginning, I foresee your hand will strike
Your mother next ; for in your secret heart
You hate me, and would free you from the yoke
Of gratitude. But I will make my death
Useless, nor think that, dying, I will leave you
In peace ; this light of day to which I gave you,
This city, always, ev'rywhere, will show me
Before your eyes ; Remorse, like furies, haunt you.
By fresh atrocities you'll think 'o calm them,
And madness, rising like a swollen stream,
Shall brand your life with bloodshed dire and frequent.
But Heav'n at last, I hope, loathing your crimes,
Will add another victim to the heap,
And, after wallowing in their blood and mine,
That you will be compell'd to shed your own ;
And that posterity shall hold your name
More odious than the cruellest of tyrants.
This my heart tells me is your destiny.
Farewell. Depart.

NERO.

Narcissus, follow me.

Scene 7.

AGRIPPINA, BURRUS.

AGRIPPINA.

Heav'ns! How unjust have my suspicions been,
Condemning you, and heark'ning to Narcissus!
Saw you, good Burrus, what a glance of fury
Nero left with me as his valediction?
The die is cast, nothing will stop him now;
The blow foretold me is about to fall:
And he will overwhelm you in your turn.

BURRUS.

Ah! As for me I've lived a day too long.
Would Heav'n his cruelty had been so kind
As to have tried its 'prentice hand on me!
Then should I have been spared the certain prospect
Of Rome's impending ruin, which this crime
Reveals. It is not that the deed alone
Wakes my despair, since jealousy might prompt
The fratricide; but, to be candid, Madam,
'Twas Nero's coolness as he saw him die,
The look of unconcern already fix'd
That marks the tyrant long inured to crime.
Let him complete his work, and put to death
A troublesome adviser, who can bear him
No longer. Far from wishing to escape
The quickest doom shall be to me most welcome.

Scene 8.

AGRIPPINA, BURRUS, ALBINA.

ALBINA.

Ah, Madam! run and save the Emperor:
Go, Burrus, go; his madness masters him,
Parted for ever from all hope of Junia,

AGRIPPINA.

What! Has the princess then ended her life?

ALBINA.

To overwhelm him with eternal sorrow,
Tho' yet alive, Junia is dead for him.
You know how hurriedly she left this spot,
Feigning that she would visit sad Octavia.
But soon she turn'd aside, and took her way
Where I could follow her, as on she sped.
She pass'd distracted thro' the palace gates;
But, when she saw the statue of Augustus,
She with her tears bedew'd his marble feet,
Clinging around them closely with her arms:
"Prince, by these knees," said she, "which I embrace,
Protect me now, last of thy family;
Rome has just witness'd, slaughter'd in thy palace,
The only one of thy descendants left
Who might have been like thee. They would have had me
Prove false to him. To keep my faith unsullied,
I here devote me to the immortal gods,
Whose altars, through thy virtue, thou dost share."
Meanwhile the people, wondering at the sight,
From all directions fly, and throng around her,
Pitying her sorrow, melted at her tears,
And with one voice they promise to defend her.
They lead her to the temple, where so long
Our virgins, vow'd to serve at Vesta's shrine,
Keep faithful watch over the precious fire
That burns for ever there. Cæsar looks on,
Nor dares to interfere as they depart.
Embolden'd by the wish to please his master,
Narcissus lays a sacrilegious hand
On Junia, and, without alarming her,
Tries to detain her. But a thousand blows
Punish his rashness, and the damsel's robes
Are sprinkled with his blood. In dumb surprise
The Emperor leaves him in their hand, and goes
Back to his palace, and his sullen silence
Forbids approach; only the name of Junia

Escapes his lips. With vague uncertain steps
He walks, with downcast and bewilder'd eyes ;
And much I fear that, night and solitude
Combining to embitter his despair,
If you should longer fail to bring him succour,
His grief may hurry him to self-destruction.
Time presses : run ! Or, in a fit of passion,
He'll take his life.

AGRIPPINA.

• "Tis justly forfeited ! •
But Burrus, let us see how far his transports
Are like to go, whether remorse will change him,
And he henceforth will list to better counsel.

BURRUS.

I would to Heav'n this crime might be his last !

B E R E N I C E.

INTRODUCTION TO BERENICE.

UNKNOWN to each other both Corneille and Racine had been requested by Henrietta, Duchess of Orleans, the daughter of our Charles I., to write a tragedy on the parting of Titus and Berenice, and both poets fell in with the suggestion. It is said that she had a personal motive in doing so, inasmuch as tender passages had occurred between herself and Louis XIV. Though a finer tragedy than Corneille's "Tite et Bérénice," Racine's play is, taken as a whole, decidedly tedious; and the criticism which was pronounced upon it by a candid friend, in the words of a well-known song, is hardly too severe:—

"Marion pleure, Marion crië,
Marion veut qu'on la marie."

which may be rendered—

"Why does Mary cry so sadly?
Mary wants a husband badly."

The first performance seems to have taken place in 1670, or early in the following year.

CHARACTERS.

TITUS, *emperor of Rome.*

BERENICE, *queen of Palestine.*

ANTIOCHUS, *king of Commagene*

PAULINUS, *friend of Titus.*

ARSACES, *friend of Antiochus.*

PHŒNICE, *friend of Berenice.*

RUTILUS, *a Roman.*

Attendants of Titus

The scene is laid at Rome, in a chamber between the apartments of Titus and those of Berenice.

BERENICE.

ACT I.

Scene 1.

ANTIOCHUS, ARSACES.

ANTIOCHUS.

Let us stay here a moment ! All this pomp
Is a new sight to you, my Arsaces.
This chamber so superb, and so secluded,
Is oftentimes privy to the Emperor's secrets :
Hither he sometimes from the Court retires,
To pour his passion forth into the ears
Of Berenice. Thro' this door he passes
From his apartments ; that one leads to hers.
Go, tell her I regret to trouble her,
But must entreat a secret interview.

ARSACES.

To trouble her, my lord ! And you her friend,
So true and generous in your care for her !
Her lover once, Antiochus, whom all
The East holds great among her greatest monarchs !
What ! Tho' in hope she shares the throne with Titus,
Is she so far removed in rank from you ?

ANTIOCHUS.

Go, nor concern yourself with other matters,
See if I soon may speak with her in private.

Scene 2.

ANTIOCHUS.

Antiochus, art thou the same as ever?
Canst say to her, "I love thee," without trembling?
I quake already, and my throbbing heart
Dreads now as much as it desired this moment.
Has not fair Berenice slain my hopes,
And did she not enjoin eternal silence?
Five years have they been dead; and, till this day,
My passion has assumed the mask of friendship.
Can I expect the destined bride of Titus
To hear me better than in Palestine?
He weds her. Have I then until this hour
Delay'd to come and own me still her lover?
What fruit will follow from a rash confession?
Since part we must, let's part without displeasure.
I will withdraw unseen, and from her sight
Go, to forget her, or perchance to die.
What! suffer torments that she knows not of
For ever, and for ever feed on tears!
Fear to offend her now when losing her!
And why, fair queen, should I incur thine anger?
Come I to ask you to resign the throne
Of empire, and to love me? Nay, I come
Only to say that, flatter'd for so long
By hope that obstacles might cross my rival,
To-day I find he can do all, and Hymen
Has lit his torch. Vain all my constancy!
After five years of love and wasted hopes,
I leave thee, faithful still, tho' hope be dead,
Can that displease her? Nay she needs must pity;
In any case I can hold out no longer.
And wherefore should a hopeless lover fear,
Who is resolved to see her nevermore?

Scene 3.

ANTIOCHUS, ARSACES.

ANTIOCHUS.

Have we admittance?

. ARSACES.

I have seen the Queen ;
But hard it was to struggle thro' the crowd
That surged around of ever fresh adorers,
Attracted by the news of coming greatness.
Titus, eight days in strict seclusion spent,
Ceases at length to mourn his father's loss,
And gives himself once more to amorous cares ;
And, may I trust the rumours of the Court,
Perhaps ere nightfall happy Berenice
Shall change the name of Queen for that of Empress.

ANTIOCHUS.

Alas !

ARSACES.

Can this report disturb my lord?

ANTIOCHUS.

So then I cannot speak with her alone ?

ARSACES.

Sire, you shall see her: I have told the Queen
You wish to have a secret interview,
And with a look she deign'd to grant assent,
Willing to lend herself to your entreaty :
Doubtless she waits a favourable moment
To escape from troublesome congratulations.

ANTIOCHUS.

'Tis well. But has my Arsaces neglected
None of the weighty matters he was charged with?

ARSACES.

You know, my lord, my prompt obedience.
Ships have been fitted out at Ostia,
Ready to quit the port at any moment,
And stay but for your orders. But I know not
Whom you are sending back to Commagene

ANTIOCHUS.

When I have seen her, then departure follows.

ARSACES.

Who must depart ?

ANTIOCHUS

Myself.

ARSACES.

You ?

ANTIOCHUS.

When I leave
This palace, I leave Rome, and that for ever.

ARSACES

Your words surprise me, and with justice, Sire.
After Queen Berenice for so long
Has forced you to forsake your throne and country,
Detaining you for three whole years at Rome ;
And when this queen, her victory achieved,
Expects your presence at her royal nuptials,
When amorous Titus, giving her his hand,
Surrounds her with a glory which reflects
Its light on you—

ANTIOCHUS.

Let her enjoy her fortune !
We've talk'd enough. Pray, leave me, Arsaces.

•
ARSACES.

I understand you, Sire. These dignities
Have made the Queen ungrateful for your kindness;
Friendship betray'd brings hatred in its train.

•
ANTIOCHUS.

No, Arsaces, I never held her dearer.

•
ARSACES.

Has then the Emperor, dazzled with new splendour,
Ventured to slight you? Does his waning favour
Warn you to take your flight from him and Rome?

ANTIOCHUS.

Titus is constant as a friend can be;
I should do wrong to blame him.

ARSACES.

Why depart, then?

Some fancy makes you your own enemy.
Heav'n places on the throne a prince who loves you,
Who erst was witness of your valiant prowess,
When in his steps you follow'd death and glory;
Who, aided by your valour, in the end
Reduced beneath his yoke the rebel Jews.
With mingled pride and pain he well remembers
The day that closed the long and doubtful siege.
The enemy upon their triple rampart
Watch'd at their ease our ineffectual efforts,
And all in vain we plied the battering ram.
You, you alone, bearing a ladder, brought
Death and destruction, as you scaled their walls.
That day had well nigh proved your last, and Titus
Embraced you, lying wounded in my arms,
While Rome's victorious legions wept your fall.
And now the time is come for you to reap
The fruit of all the blood they saw you shed.
If, eager to behold your realm again,
You weary of a life without a sceptre,

Can you not wait at least till, honour laden
From Cæsar's triumph, glad Euphrates greet you
With such additions to your royal title
As Rome bestows in token of her friendship?
Can nought prevail to change your purpose, Sire?
You answer nothing!

ANTIOCHUS.

What wouldst have me say?
I wait to have a word with Berenice.

ARSACES.

And then, my lord?

ANTIOCHUS.

Hers will decide my fate.

ARSACES.

How, Sire?

ANTIOCHUS.

I wait to learn from her own lips
The truth or falsehood of the voice of rumour
That seats her on th' imperial throne with Titus.
If she is pledged to wed him, I go hence.

ARSACES.

And why so fatal in your eyes, this marriage?

ANTIOCHUS.

The rest I'll tell you after we are gone.

ARSACES.

In what perplexity your words involve me!

ANTIOCHUS.

She comes. Farewell. Do all that I have said.

Scene 4.

BERENICE, ANTIOCHUS, PHENICE.

BERENICE.

At last from these oppressive gratulations
I steal away, from friends made mine by fortune ;
Escaping from their vain and tedious homage,
To find a friend whose words come from his heart.
I'll not deny it, that my just impatience
Blamed you for some degree of negligence.
"Why does Antiochus," said I, "whose care
For me has had for witness Rome and Asia,
Constant and true, whatever cross'd my path,
In close attendance on my varied fortunes ;
Why, when to-day Heav'n seems to promise me
An honour that I fain would share with him,
Hides he himself, and leaves me to the mercy
Of stranger crowds ?"

ANTIOCHUS.

'Tis true then, Madam, is it !
Am I to understand from what you say
That your long wooing is to end in marriage ?

BERENICE.

I will confide to you my late alarms.
The last few days not without tears I've spent ;
The mourning Titus on his Court imposed
Had held his love suspended e'en in secret ;
No more for me that ardour he display'd
When by my eyes entranced the livelong day
He sat, and sigh'd, and could not speak for tears ;
He bade me for a while a sad farewell.
Think how I must have grieved, whose fervent passion
Adores him for himself alone, as ofttimes
To you I've own'd ; who, were his state as mean
As 'tis exalted, would have chosen him
But for his virtues.

ANTIOCHUS.

Has he now resumed

His amorous suit?

BERENICE.

You witness'd how last night

The senate, seconding his pious cares,

Enroll'd his father as a deity.

His filial duty, satisfied thereby,

Has given place to love and care for me.

E'en at this moment, tho' he told me not

Of his intention, his command has gather'd

The senate, that the bounds of Palestine

May beyond Syria and Arabia reach;

And if I may believe his friends' report

And his own promise sworn a thousand times,

He will crown Berenice Queen of all,

Adding to other titles that of Empress.

Hither he comes himself for my assurance.

ANTIOCHUS.

And I am come to bid farewell for ever.

BERENICE.

Farewell for ever! What is this you say?

Prince, you look pale, and trouble dims your eye!

ANTIOCHUS.

Yes, I must leave you.

BERENICE.

What! may I not know

The reason—

ANTIOCHUS (*aside*).

Without seeing her again

'Twere better to have gone.

BERENICE.

• What fear you? speak :
Why keep me in suspense? What mystery
Surrounds this parting ?

ANTIOCHUS.

• 'Tis to your command
I bow, remember, as you hear me now
For the last time. If from your present greatness
Your memory recalls your birthplace, Madam,
You cannot have forgotten that my heart
There felt love's arrows first from your sweet eyes :
Agrippa gave his sanction to my passion,
And, as your brother, spoke on my behalf ;
Nor seem'd you angry at the suit so urged.
But to my loss came Titus, saw, and won
Your admiration dazzled by a hero
Who carried in his hands the wrath of Rome.
Judæa quail'd before him, and I fell
The earliest victim of his vanquish'd foes.
Soon did your lips, making my fate more bitter,
Bid mine be silent. Long did I dispute
That cruel sentence, with my eyes I spoke,
Follow'd you everywhere with sighs and tears.
At last your rigour turn'd the trembling scale,
I must conceal my passion, or be banish'd.
You made me swear obedience to that compact :
But I confess, e'en at that very moment,
When you extorted promise so unfair,
I swore that I would never cease to love you.

BERENICE.

Alas, what words are these ?

ANTIOCHUS.

Five years have I
Quell'd mine own heart, and will be silent still.
I follow'd my victorious rival's arms,
And hoped, since tears were vain, that I might shed

My blood; or that my name, by many a feat
Renown'd, might reach your ears, deaf to my voice.
Heav'n seem'd disposed to end my misery,
You mourn'd my death, but a worse fate was mine,
And, disappointed, I survived the danger.
The Emperor's valour more than match'd my rage;
His merit I must own with true esteem.
Tho' near in prospect gleam'd th' imperial sceptre,
The darling of the universe, and loved
By you, he seem'd the mark for every blow;
Whilst hopeless, scorn'd, and weary of his life,
His hapless rival follow'd where he led.
I see your heart echoes my praise of him
In secret, and, attentive to my tale
Of woe, you hear me now with less regret,
For Titus' sake forgiving all the rest.

At last the long and cruel siege was o'er,
He tamed the rebels left by feuds intestine,
By fire and famine, bleeding, sick, and pale,
And laid their ramparts low 'neath heaps of ruins.
Rome saw you with the conqueror arrive.
How in my desert home I pined and languish'd!
Long stay'd I roaming about Cæsarea,
Those charming gardens where I learn'd to love you,
And made my quest for you thro' your dominions
Sad at your absence, sought to trace your steps,
And wept my failure; till in mere despair,
Master'd by grief, I turn'd tow'ards Italy;
Where Fate reserved for me her latest stroke.
Titus, embracing me, brought me to you;
A veil of friendship so deceived you both
That you reveal'd your love to me who loved you.
But still some lingering hope soothed my displeasure,
Rome and Vespasian frown'd upon your sighs,
For all his conquests Titus might be foil'd.

The sire is dead, and now the son is master.
Why fled I not at once? Some days I wish'd
Wherein to watch the progress of affairs.
My cup is full of sorrow, yours of joy.
You, without me, will have enough to witness
Your happiness with glad congratulations.

I, who could only add ill-omen'd tears,
Too constant victim of a fruitless love,
Relieved to tell this story of my woes,
Stain'd by no wild revenge, to her who caused them,
Depart, altho' I love you more than ever.

•
BERENICE.

I would not have believed that on this day
Which is to join my destiny with Cæsar's,
I could have suffer'd mortal, unrebuked,
To tell me to my face he is my lover. • •
But friendship kept me silent; for its sake
I pardon language that might well offend me,
Nor check'd the torrent of unjust upbraiding;
Yet more, I grieve to hear that we must part.
Heav'n knows that in the midst of all my honours
I yearn'd for one thing more, that you might witness
My joy; like all the world I held your virtues
Esteem'd; my Titus met your admiration
With warm regard. And many a time I joy'd
As if with Titus when I talk'd with you.

ANTIOCHUS.

'Tis this that wings my flight. I shun, too late,
Converse wherein you give no thought to me.
I fly from Titus, from a name that tortures
Each moment that your cruel lips repeat it.
Shall I say more? I cannot bear those eyes
Whose absent gaze seems fix'd upon another.
Farewell. Your image in my heart abides;
I go to wait for death, still loving you.
But fear not that my passion so deluded
Will make the world resound with my misfortunes:
The tidings of a death that I desire
Alone will tell you that I lived so long.
Farewell.

Scene 5.

BERENICE, PHŒNICE.

PHŒNICE.

Ah, how I pity him ! Such faith
Deserved a happier lot. Madam, do you
Not pity him ?

BERENICE.

This sudden parting leaves me
(I own it, my Phœnice) secret sorrow.

PHŒNICE.

I would have kept him back.

BERENICE.

I keep him back !
Nay, I should rather force me to forget him.
Would'st have me, then, encourage a mad passion ?

PHŒNICE.

Not yet has Titus all his heart unbosomed.
With eyes of jealousy Rome sees you, Madam ;
I dread for you the rigour of her laws,
They count a foreign marriage a disgrace :
All monarchs Rome detests, and Berenice
Is one.

BERENICE.

The time is gone when I could tremble.
The Emperor loves me, and his word has pow'r
Unlimited. He'll see the senate bring me
Their homage, and the people crown his statues
With garlands.

Have you seen this night's rare splendour ?
Are not your eyes fill'd with its dazzling glory ?
That funeral pyre, the darkness lost in light
Of blazing torches, armies with their eagles,

Long lines of lictors, consuls, senators,
A crowd of Kings, and all with glory borrow'd
From Titus; gold and purple which enhanced
His majesty, and bays that crown'd the victor;
All eyes of visitors from every land
Turning their eager gaze on him alone;
That noble carriage, and that air benign,—
Good gods! with what affection and respect
All hearts assured him of their loyalty!
Could any then behold him and not think,
As I did, that, however lowly born,
The world would still have own'd him as its master?

But whither does my fond remembrance wander?
All Rome, Phœnice, at this very moment
Offers her vows for Titus, and with smoke
Of sacrifice inaugurates his reign.
Why should we linger? Let us add our pray'rs
For his success to Heav'n that watches o'er him.
Then straightway, without waiting to be summon'd,
I'll seek him, and in loving colloquy
Say all that warm affection, long repress'd,
Inspires in hearts contented with each other.

ACT II.

Scene 1.

TITUS, PAULINUS, ATTENDANTS.

TITUS.

Has Commagene's monarch been inform'd
That I desire to see him?

PAULINUS.

To the Queen

I went, and found the Prince had been with her,
But he was gone or ever I arrived.
I have left word to let him know your wishes.

TITUS.

'Tis well. And what does she, Queen Berenice ?

PAULINUS

The Queen this moment, grateful for your goodness,
Loads Heav'n with pray'rs for your prosperity.
She is gone forth, my lord.

TITUS

Too kind a Princess !

Alas !

PAULINUS.

Why breathe for her that sigh of sorrow ?
When well nigh all the East will bow before her,
Needs she your pity ?

TITUS

Let us talk in private.

Scene 2.

TITUS, PAULINUS.

TITUS

Rome, still uncertain of my purpose, waits
To learn the future fortune of the Queen ;
The secrets of her heart and mine, Paulinus,
Are now become the theme of every tongue.
'Tis time that I should make my meaning plain,
What says the public voice of her and me ?
Tell me, what hear you ?

PAULINUS.

By all lips, my liege,
I hear your virtues and her beauty praised.

TITUS.

What say they of the sighs I breathe for her?
What end expect they of a love so faithful?

PAULINUS.

Nought balks your pow'r; love on, or quench this passion,
The Court will be subservient to your wishes.

TITUS.

Ah yes, I know the Court is insincere,
Too ready always to content its masters,
Approving e'en a Nero's horrid crimes;
I've seen them on their knees adore his madness.
I will not take for judge a servile Court,
I'll play my part upon a nobler stage;
And, without giving ear to Flattery's voice,
I wish to hear the heart of Rome thro' you,
As you have promised. Fear and reverence
Close me the door to murmurs and complaint:
For better eyes and ears, my dear Paulinus,
To you I make appeal, and borrow yours:
'Tis this return I ask for private friendship,
That what my people feel you should express,
That thro' the mists of flattery the truth
Should reach me, thanks to your sincerity.
Speak, then. For what must Berenice look?
Will Rome to her show harshness or indulgence?
Am I to think that she would be offended
Were Queen so fair to grace th' imperial throne?

PAULINUS.

Doubt not, my lord, be't reason or caprice,
Rome will be loath to have her for an Empress.
They know her charms, and own that hand so fair
May seem to you worthy to wield your sceptre;
No Roman dame, say they, has heart more noble;
She has a thousand virtues, but, my lord,
She is a Queen. Rome, by a changeless law
Admits no foreign blood with hers to mingle,

Nor will she recognize the lawless issue
Of unions which our customs have forbidden.
Rome, too, you know, when banishing her Kings,
Condemn'd that name, so sacred hitherto,
To the black stigma of eternal hatred ;
And, tho' she stoops, submissive to her Cæsars,
That hatred, the last relic of her pride,
Survives in hearts whence freedom has departed.
Julius, whose martial glory first subdued her,
And drown'd the voice of law 'mid din of arms,
Smitten with Cleopatra's beauty, fear'd
To wed her, and in Egypt left her lonely
To mourn his absence. Antony, whose love
Made her his idol, in her lap forgot
Country and fame, yet dared not call her wife :
Rome track'd the traitor to his charmer's knees,
Nor let her vengeful fury be disarm'd
Till she had overwhelm'd the amorous pair.
Since then, my lord, Caligula and Nero,
Monsters whose very name I blush to mention,
Whose outward aspect only show'd them human,
Who trampled under foot all other laws,
Fear'd this one only, and refrain'd from lighting
Before our eyes a hymeneal torch
Hateful to Rome. You bade me speak with frankness.
We've seen the brother of the freedman Pallas,
Felix, whose back still bears the brand of Claudius,
Become the husband of two foreign Queens,
And, if I needs must tell unvarnish'd truth,
Both Queens were of the blood of Berenice.
Think you that Rome without offence could see
Partner of Cæsar's bed this Eastern princess,
Whose countrymen beheld one of our slaves
Leave chains and fetters for their Queens' caresses
Thus public feeling views your present passion ;
Nor am I sure that, ere this sun has set,
The senate will not, in the name of Rome,
Repeat to you what I have dared to say,
And the whole city, falling at your feet,
Add their entreaties for a choice more worthy
Of you and them. Weigh well what you will answer,

TITUS.

Ah! What a love they wish me to renounce!

PAULINUS.

That love is ardent, I must e'en confess it.

TITUS.

Stronger a thousand times than you can think.
It has become to me a needful pleasure
To see her every day, and win her favour.
Yet more, (no secrets have I with Paulinus,)
How oft has Heav'n received my warmest thanks
For her, that she embraced my father's side
In Edom, and beneath his banners ranged
The armies of the East, and, all mankind
Rousing, entrusted to his peaceful sway
Rome, drunk with blood! I wish'd my father's throne,
E'en I, Paulinus, who to save his life
Would willingly have died, had Fate consented
To lengthen out the thread of his existence:
And all in hopes, (how ill a lover knows
What he desires!) to share that throne with her,
Her love and loyalty to recognize,
And lay my heart with all the world before her.
In spite of all my love and all her beauty,
After so many oaths, so many tears,
Now when I have the pow'r to crown such charms,
Now when my heart adores her more than ever,
And can, united to her own in marriage,
Pay in one day the vows of five long years,
I am about—Ye gods, how shall I say it?

PAULINUS.

What, Sire?

TITUS.

To part from her for evermore.
This moment only seals my heart's surrender:
If I desired to hear your frank avowal,
'Twas only that your zeal might aid in secret

Th' extinction of a love with anguish silenced.
Long has fair Berenice held the balance
Suspended, and if glory outweighs passion,
Believe me it has been a desp'rate conflict,
From which my heart will bleed for many a day.
Calm was life's ocean when love's bark I launch'd,
The sceptre of the world by other hands
Was sway'd. Consulting no one but myself,
Free felt I to indulge each amorous sigh ;
But scarce had Heav'n recall'd my father's spirit,
And I, with sad farewell, had closed his eyes,
When I awoke from that fools' paradise.
I felt the burden that was laid upon me,
I knew that soon, instead of soft indulgence,
I should be call'd on to renounce myself,
And that Heav'n's choice, thwarting the course of love,
Would make the world henceforth engross my care.
To-day Rome watches my new line of conduct ;
What shame for me, for her what evil omen,
If at my first step all her claims I spurn'd,
And based my happiness upon the ruin
Of ancient laws ! Bent on this sacrifice,
I wish'd to break the blow to Berenice :
But where can I begin ? These last eight days,
How oft have I been minded to disclose
My purpose ! And each time my tongue refused
To speak a single word, as if 'twere frozen
Within my mouth. I hoped the pain I felt
Might give her warning of our common woe :
But touch'd by my alarm, all unsuspecting,
She sought to dry the tears whose source she knew not,
And nought foreboded less than that a love,
So well deserved, was drawing to an end.
At length this morning I have steel'd my heart
To tell the truth : Paulinus, I must see her.
I wait to ask Antiochus to take
This precious charge, no longer mine to guard,
Back to the Eastern clime from which she came.
To-morrow Rome shall see the Queen depart
With him. Soon she shall learn her fate from me,
When for the last time we converse together.

PAULINUS.

Light no less from that heroic soul
Victory has follow'd everywhere.
The Judæa, and her smoking ramparts,
Her monuments of noble courage,
Told me well enough you would not mar
The fame that you have won by feats of arms,
That the victor of so many nations
Her or later would subdue his passions.

TITUS.

Under what specious names does Glory mask
Her cruel will! How would her charms seem fairer,
Were it but death she call'd on me to face!
Till now, 'twas Berenice who inspired
The ardour that I felt for her attractions.
You know that once Renown no lustre shed
Around my name; brought up at Nero's Court,
My youth, by ill example led astray,
Too prone to heed the voice of self-indulgence,
Scorn'd nobler aims, Paulinus. Berenice
Enthrall'd my heart. What cannot Love achieve
To please the loved one, and to win tho' vanquish'd?
I spent my blood; all to my sword gave way;
Triumphant I return'd. But tears and blood
Sufficed not to deserve my lady's favour:
A thousand wretches bless'd the aid I brought them.
On every side they saw my bounty spread,
And I was happy, more than you can guess,
When in her eyes I read warm approbation
Of countless hearts won by my benefits.
I owe her all. And what reward is hers?
That debt about to be flung back upon her!
As recompense for virtues so unrivall'd
My tongue will say: "Depart, see me no more"

PAULINUS.

What, Sire, is all that new-born grandeur nothing,
Which to Euphrates will extend her pow'r?

Honours so great as to surprise the senate,
A hundred tribes added to her dominions;
Are novel tokens of ingratitude.

TITUS.

Weak trifles to engage so great a sorrow !
I know too well how Berenice's heart
Craves nothing but mine own. I loved her fondly,
And was beloved as well. Since that glad day,
(Should I not rather call it most disastrous),
Loving me only for myself, in Rome
A stranger, unfamiliar with my Court,
She lives without a wish but for the hour
When she may see my face, meanwhile content
To wait. And if at times my footstep lingers,
And I appear not at th' expected moment,
I find her when I come all bathed in tears,
Which long refuse my efforts to dispel them.
All the most binding ties of love, reproaches
That sweetly merge in transports of delight
Dash'd with fresh fears, charms unconstrain'd by art,
Beauty and virtue, all I find in her.
For five whole years have I beheld her daily,
And every day her face wears new attractions.
No more I'll think of it. Let's go, Paulinus,
My resolution wavers while we linger.
Great Heav'n's, that I should greet her with such tidings !
Once more, let's go, I must not hesitate.
I know my duty, 'tis for me to follow :
Without concern whether I live or die.

Scene 3.

TITUS, PAULINUS, RUTILUS.

RUTILUS.

The Queen, your Majesty, would speak with you.

TITUS.

Alas, Paulinus !

PAULINUS.

● Drawing back already !
Remember, Sire, your noble resolution ;
Now is the time.

TITUS.

We'll see her. Let her come.

Scene 4.

TITUS, BERENICE, PAULINUS, PHENICE.

BERENICE.

Be not-offended, if my zeal outruns
Discretion, and disturbs your privacy.
While your Court, gathering around, repeat
The favours show'r'd so freely on my head,
Sir, is it right that I at such a moment
Should stay alone, and gratitude be silent ?
I know your friend sincere, nor need I shun
His presence, well acquainted as he is
With our hearts' secret ; you have done with mourning,
Nought hinders you, and yet you seek me not.
I hear you offer me another sceptre,
But from yourself I hear no word of it.
Let us have more repose and less display ;
Is your love dumb except before the senate ?
Ah, Titus (for my heart disowns those titles
Of majesty which fear and reverence prompt),
Why should your love be burden'd with such cares ?
Are crowns the only prize that it can offer ?
How long have you supposed I covet grandeur ?
A sigh, a look, a word that falls from you,
Are all th' ambition of a heart like mine.
See me more often, and come empty handed.
Is all your time devoted to your empire ?
Eight days have pass'd, and have you nought to tell me ?
One word would reassure this timid heart !
But was your speech of me, when I surprised you ?

Were my concerns the subject of discourse?
Was I at least, Sir, present to your thought?

TITUS.

Of that you may be sure: for Heav'n is witness
That Berenice is before me always.
Nor time, nor absence, once again I swear it,
Can banish you from my adorning soul.

BERENICE.

Why, what is this? You swear eternal ardour,
But, even while you swear, are cold as ice!
Why make appeal to Heav'n's omnipotence?
What need have I of oaths to strengthen trust?
I have no wish to think you false, my lord,
And will believe the witness of a sigh.

TITUS.

Madam—

BERENICE.

I listen. But, without reply,
You turn away your eyes and seem perplex'd!
Why is your countenance so full of woe?
Will you for ever mourn your father's death?
Can nothing charm away this gnawing sorrow?

TITUS.

Ah! would to Heav'n my father yet were living,
How happy should I be!

BERENICE.

Sir, this regret
Does honour to your filial piety,
But to his memory your tears have paid
Due tribute. Other cares you owe to Rome;
I dare not say how much your glory moves
My own concern. Once I could soothe your trouble
And Berenice's voice you heard with pleasure;
For your sake vex'd with manifold misfortunes,

A word from you has made me check my tears.
 You mourn a father: 'tis a common sorrow,
 While I (the bare remembrance makes me shudder,)
 So fearfully torn from him whom more than life
 I loved, the anguish of whose heart you know
 When parted from my Titus for a moment,
 I, who would die if banish'd from your sight,
 Never to see you more—

TITUS.

Alas! What say you?
 Why choose this time? Pray cease, for pity's sake:
 Your kindness crushes an ungrateful wretch.

BERENICE.

Ungrateful! can it be that you are that?
 Are you so weary of my tenderness?

TITUS.

No, never; since I must the truth confess,
 My heart burns now with fiercer flames than ever.
 But—

BERENICE.

Speak.

TITUS.

Alas!

BERENICE.

Go on

TITUS.

Rome and the empire

BERENICE

Well said

TITUS.

Let's go, Paulinus; I am dumb

Scène 5.

BERENICE, PHœNICE.

BERENICE.

So soon to leave me! and without a word!
A doleful meeting truly, dear Phœnice!
What have I done? What means he by this silence?

PHœNICE.

Like you I'm puzzled to account for it.
Does nothing to your memory occur
Which may have raised a prejudice against you?
Consider well.

BERENICE.

Alas! you may believe me,
The more I wish to bring to mind the past,
From the first day I saw him till this hour,
The only fault I find is too much fondness.
You heard us. Tell me frankly, my Phœnice,
Did I say anything that could displease him?
I know not if, perchance, with too much heat
I scorn'd his gifts, or blamed the grief that vex'd him—
Is it his people's hatred that he dreads?
He fears, it may be, to espouse a Queen.
Alas, if that were true.—It cannot be,
A hundred times at least he has assured me
He slights their cruel laws. Why does he not
Explain so harsh a silence? This suspense
Will kill me. How could I endure to live
Neglected, feeling I had him offended?
Let us go after him. But thro' my brain
Flashes a thought that may the source reveal
Of this disorder. Has he learn'd where loves
Antiochus? Can that have moved his anger?
I heard the King was summon'd to his presence.
Why further seek for cause of my distress?
Doubtless this trouble that has so alarm'd me

Is but a light suspicion, which with ease
May be disarm'd. This feeble victory
Brings me no pride, my Titus. Would to Heav'n
A rival worthier of your jealous fears
Might try my faith, and offer empire wider
Than Rome can boast, to pay me for my love ;
While you had nought to give me but yourself !
Then would you see, victorious and beloved,
How much I prize your heart, my dearest Titus.
Come, let us go. One word will clear his doubts.
Let me take courage, I can please him still
Too soon have I counted myself unhappy ;
Titus must love me if his heart is jealous.

ACT III.

Scene 1.

TITUS, ANTIOCHUS, ARSACES

TITUS.

So you would leave us, Prince ! What sudden reason
Speeds your departure, shall I say your flight ?
Would you have gone in secret, without taking
Our farewell wishes ? Is it as a foe
You quit us ? What will Rome then say to this ?
I, as your friend, my Court, and all the empire ?
Wherein have I offended ? Did I treat you
Without distinction just like other kings ?
While yet my father lived my heart was yours,
That was the only present I could make you ;
Now, when my hand can open with my heart,
You shun the favours I would fain bestow.
Think you, the hazards of the past forgotten,
My present grandeur every thought engrosses,
And all my friends, fast fading in the distance,
Wanted no longer, are accounted strangers ?

Of you, dear Prince, who thus would steal away,
My need is greater than it ever was.

ANTIOCHUS.

TITUS

ANTIOCHUS.

Alas! what can you look for
From one so luckless, Sire, but useless wishes?

TITUS.

Can I forget, Prince, that my victory
Owed half its glory to your valiant deeds,
That in the train of captives Rome beheld
More than one vanquish'd by Antiochus?
And laid up in the Capitol she saw
Spoils that your hands had taken from the Jews?
These brave achievements are enough for me,
No further claim I make but on your counsel.
I know that Berenice, to your care
A debtor, has in you a faithful friend;
Her eyes and ears are giv'n to you alone
In Rome, you share with us one heart and soul.
For friendship's sake, so constant and devoted,
Exert the influence that you have with her;
See her for me.

ANTIOCHUS.

I? Nay, I cannot face her.
She has received my last farewell for ever.

TITUS.

Prince, speak to her again on my behalf.

ANTIOCHUS.

Plead your own cause, my lord. The Queen adores you
Why should you at this hour deny yourself
The pleasure of so charming an avowal?

She waits you with impatience. I will answer
For her obedience with my parting breath;
Ready to yield consent, herself has told me
That when you see her next, 'twill be to woo her.

TITUS.

Ah; would that I could thus confess my passion!
To do so would be happiness indeed!
My love was ready to burst forth to-day,
This very day when I, dear Prince, must leave her.

ANTIOCHUS.

Leave her, my lord?

TITUS.

Such my sad destiny:
For her and Titus is no longer hope
Of wedlock, vainly that sweet thought has lured me:
To-morrow, Prince, she must depart with you.

ANTIOCHUS.

Heav'ns! What is this?

TITUS.

Pity the pow'r that galls me:
Lord of the universe, I rule its fortunes;
I set up Kings, and cast them down at will;
Yet can I not of mine own heart dispose.
Rome, the eternal foe of royal titles,
Disdains a beauty born to wear the purple:
The glitter of a crown and long descent
From kingly sires are in her eyes a scandal
To smirch my flame. This heart of mine is free
To rove elsewhere, and choose the meanest bride
Of Roman blood, nor need I dread a murmur
To mar the shouts of welcome and delight.
The mighty Julius could not stem that tide
Which sweeps me on. If Rome to-morrow sees not
The Queen's departure, she will hear the people

Demand of me her instant banishment.
Let us then spare ourselves that base affront,
And yield, since yield we must, without disgrace.
My eight days' silence and averted eyes
Will have prepared her for this sad announcement;
E'en at this moment, restless and excited,
She longs to learn my purpose from myself.
Soothe the keen anguish of a tortured lover,
And spare me the sore task of explanation.
Go, make her understand my troubled silence,
And why it is I must avoid her presence;
Be you sole witness of her tears and mine,
Take her my last farewell, and bring me hers.
I shrink from parting words and looks of sadness,
Which might o'erthrow my tottering resolution.
If it can ease her misery to know
That in my soul her image lives and reigns,
Assure her, Prince, that, faithful to the end,
My broken heart, banish'd from happiness
No less than she, and bearing to the tomb
Her name beloved, will, like a captive bird,
Pine for release, as long as Heav'n that tears
Her from me, may protract my weary life.
You, Prince, whom friendship's ties alone have bound
To her, forsake her not in her affliction;
By you escorted to her Eastern realms,
Let her appear in triumph, not in flight.
And to confirm a friendship so devoted,
And keep my name fresh in your memories,
Let your dominions reach each other's borders;
Euphrates only shall divide your kingdoms.
I know the senate holds your name so honour'd,
They with one voice will ratify this gift,
I join Cilicia to your Commagene.
Farewell. Desert her not, my Berenice,
Queen of my heart, sole object of desire,
Whom only I can love till I expire.

Scene 2.

ANTIOCHUS, ARSACES.

ARSACES.

Thus is kind Heav'n prepared to do you justice :
You will leave Rome, Sire, but with Berenice.
You force her not away, they to your hands
Consign her.

ANTIOCHUS.

Give me time, good Arsaces.
The change is great, and my surprise extreme ;
Titus to me resigns his dearest treasure !
Gods ! can I credit what mine ears have heard ?
And should my heart be glad, could I believe it ?

ARSACES.

And what am I, my lord, to think of you ?
With what fresh hindrance is your joy confronted ?
Did you deceive me when just now, at parting,
Still moved with anguish at a last farewell,
You told me all your heart had dared to tell her,
And trembled at your own audacity ?
'Twas her impending marriage urged your flight,
That fear removed, what care can trouble you ?
Follow where love invites your willing footsteps.

ANTIOCHUS.

With her safe conduct I am charged, my friend,
And sweetest intercourse shall long enjoy ;
Her eyes will grow accustom'd to the sight
Of mine, and learn, perchance, how much my ardour,
So persevering, makes the suit of Titus
Seem weak and cold. Here all his grandeur daunts me ;
In Rome nought else is seen beside his splendour ;
But, tho' his name is in the East renown'd,
The traces of my glory too are there
For her to see.

ARSACES.

Ay, Fortune favours you.

ANTIOCHUS.

Ah! How we mock ourselves with self-deception!

ARSACES.

Why, what deception?

ANTIOCHUS.

Could I ever please her?
Or Berenice cease to thwart my love?
Would she let fall a word to ease my pain?
Think you that she, in her unhappiness,
Tho' all the world besides should slight her charms,
Would thank me for my tears, or condescend
So far as to accept the zealous service
Which she should feel she owed to my affection?

ARSACES.

And who can better solace her disgrace?
Her prospect now is changed from what it was:
Titus forsakes her.

ANTIOCHUS.

Ah! this turn of fortune
Will bring me nothing but an added torture,
To learn how much she loves him from her tears;
I shall behold her grief, and pity her
Myself. The fruit of all my love will be
To see her weep, but not, alas, for me.

ARSACES.

Why thus continue to torment yourself?
Was ever known a noble heart more feeble?
Open your eyes, and see how many reasons
Must move fair Berenice to be yours.
Now that no longer Titus courts her favour,
She will perforce accept your hand; my master.

ANTIOCHUS.

And why perforce?

AESACES.

Give her some days to weep,—
Let the first sobs of grief be unrestrain'd ;
Then all will work for you, vexation, vengeance,
His absence and your presence, time itself,
Her single hand too weak to wield three sceptres,
Your realms so ready to be join'd with hers,
Interest, reason, friendship, all unites you.

ANTIOCHUS.

I breathe once more, you give me back my life,
With joy I hail a presage so agreeable.
Why tarry? Let my mission be discharged.
I'll see the Queen, and since the task is mine,
Tell her that Titus has deserted her—

But stay, what would I do? Is it for me
To take upon myself such cruel errand?
My heart revolts, whether from love or pity.
Shall my dear Berenice hear from me
She is forsaken? Who would e'er have guess'd it,
That such a word should strike upon her ear?

AESACES.

Her indignation will all fall on Titus ;
And if you speak, 'twill be at her desire.

ANTIOCHUS.

No, let us not intrude upon her sorrow ;
Let others come to tell of her misfortune.
Do you not think it will be hard enough
For her to hear how Titus spurns her from him,
Without the further bitterness of learning
His scornful treatment from a rival's lips?
Once more, let's fly ; nor by such evil tidings
Incur the weight of her undying hatred.

ARSACES,

Ah! Here she comes. Now to your part, my lord

ANTIOCHUS

Scene 3.

BERENICE, ANTIOCHUS, ARSACES, PHENICE.

BERENICE.

Why, how is this? I thought you gone

ANTIOCHUS.

I see that you are disappointed, Madam,
And it was Cæsar that you here expected.
Him must you blame if, spite of my farewell,
My presence still offends unwilling eyes.
I should, perhaps, have been ere now at Ostia,
Had not his orders kept me at his Court.

BERENICE.

Your presence then he welcomes, mine he shuns.

ANTIOCHUS.

He has detain'd me but to speak of you.

BERENICE.

Of me, Prince?

ANTIOCHUS.

Yes, of you.

BERENICE.

What could he say?

ANTIOCHUS.

A thousand others are more fit to tell you,

BERENICE.

What, Sir!—

ANTIOCHUS.

Suspend, dear Madam, your resentment.
Another, far from seeking to be silent,
Perhaps would triumph, and with ready boldness
Might gladly yield to your impatient wish,
But I, whose heart shrinks ever, as you know,
From wounding feelings dearer than mine own,
Would rather risk displeasure than distress you,
Dreading your sorrow even more than anger.
Ere sunset you will justify my silence.
Madam farewell

BERENICE.

What words are these? Stay, Prince,
I cannot hide my trouble from your eye.
You see before you a distracted Queen;
Speak but two words, for I am sick at heart.
You fear, say you, to trouble my repose;
This cruel reticence spares me no pain,
It pierces deep, it stirs my wrath, my hatred.
Sir, if you hold my peace of mind so precious,
If ever I myself to you was dear,
Lighten this darkness that you see o'erwhelms me.
Tell me what Titus said.

ANTIOCHUS.

For Heav'n's sake, Madam—

BERENICE.

Do you so little fear to disobey me?

ANTIOCHUS.

To tell the truth would be to make you hate me.

BERENICE.

Speak, I command you.

ANTIOCHUS.

Gods! What vehemence!
Once more, believe me, you will praise my silence.

BERENICE.

This moment, Prince, comply with what I ask.
Or be assured that I shall always hate you.

ANTIOCHUS.

That sentence, Madam, shall release my tongue.
Since you will have it so, I must content you.
But do not be deceived: I have to tell
Of troubles peradventure little dream'd of.
I know your heart; you must expect a blow
To strike it where your feeling is most tender.
Titus commands me—

BERENICE.

What?

ANTIOCHUS.

To let you know
That you must part for ever from each other.

BERENICE.

Part! He and I? Titus from Berenice?

ANTIOCHUS.

Yet at the same time I must do him justice;
All the repugnance that a generous heart
Can feel when love is vanquish'd by despair,
I've seen in him. He worships while he weeps.
But he's convinced 'tis vain to love you longer.
Rome holds the very name of Queen suspected;
Yes, you and he must part. You leave to-morrow.

BERENICE.

Part! Oh, Phœnice!

• • PHŒNICE.

You must show, dear Madam,
The greatness of your soul. This sudden blow
Is doubtless hard to bear, and well may stun you.

•
•
BERENICE.

Titus forsake me! All his vows forgotten!
Titus, who swore to me—I'll not believe it;
Honour forbids him so to cast me off.
It is a slander on his innocence,
A trap to tear two loving hearts asunder.
Too dear he holds me to desire my death.
Come, I will see him, speak with him forthwith.
Come, let us go.

•
ANTIOCHUS.

Is falsehood in my face? --

BERENICE.

Too much you wish it true, Sir, to persuade me.
No, I believe you not. Be't as it may,
Take heed you never see my face again.

(to PHŒNICE.)

Do not desert me in this dire distress.
I struggle hard to keep myself deluded.

Scene 4.

ANTIOCHUS, ARSACES.

ANTIOCHUS.

Heard I aright? or did my ears deceive me?
Me did she bid, me, ne'er to see her more?
I'll take good care of that. Was I not leaving,
Had Titus not detain'd me 'gainst my will?
Yes, I must go. Get ready, Arsaces.
Her hatred, wherewithal she thinks to blast me.
Strikes off my chains. Just now you saw a lover
Departing, jealous with a wild despair;

Now, with this warning ringing in mine ears,
I'll go, methinks, in proud indifference.

ARSACES.

There is less need to leave her now than ever.

ANTIOCHUS.

Shall I then stay to see myself disdain'd,
And bear the blame of Cæsar's cruelty?
See myself punish'd because he offends?
With what injustice and unworthy scorn
She tells me to my face that I'm dishonest!
For thanks she taxes me with perfidy,
Saying that I'm a traitor, he is true!
And when forsooth? Just at the bitter moment
When I was setting forth my rival's tears;
When to console her I presented Titus
More tenderly attach'd than truth may warrant.

ARSACES.

Why vex yourself, my lord, with thoughts like these?
Give to this angry torrent time to flow;
A week, or at the most a month, will dry it.
Only remain.

ANTIOCHUS.

No, Arsaces, I leave her.
Her sorrow might excite my sympathy;
My peace, my honour urge me to be gone.
Let us fly far enough from Berenice
To hear her very name no longer mention'd.
Still there is time, the day is not yet spent.
I'll seek my palace, there to wait for you;
Haste, see how she supports this crushing blow,
Until I know she lives, I cannot go.

ACT IV.

Scene 1.

BERENICE. ' "

Phœnice comes not! Tantalizing moments,
How slow ye seem to my impatient wishes!
Restless I pace this floor, faint, sick at heart
Strength fails me, yet it kills me to be quiet.
Phœnice comes not! Ah, how this delay
Appals my heart with a too fatal presage!
Phœnice has no answer to bring back;
Titus, ungrateful Titus will not hear her;
He seeks in flight a refuge from my fury.

Scene 2.

BERENICE, PHŒNICE.

BERENICE.

Well, dear Phœnice, have you seen the Emperor?
What says he? Will he come?

PHŒNICE.

Yes, I have seen him,
And painted your distress in darkest tints;
Tears he would fain have check'd flow'd from his eyes.

BERENICE.

And comes he?

PHŒNICE.

He will come; doubt it not, Madam.
But will you show yourself in this disorder?
Calm yourself, dearest lady, be composed.
Let me replace the veil that from its place

Has slipt, and smooth this too dishewell'd hair :
No trace of weeping must your charms disfigure.

BERENICE.

Nay, let them be, Phœnice; her shall see
His handiwork. What boots this vain apparel?
If my true love, my tears and sighs, nor they
Alone, but certain death whose near approach
I feel, avail not to recall him to me;
Will your superfluous cares be more successful,
Aiding attractions that have ceased to move him?

PHŒNICE.

Why will you load him with unjust reproaches?
I hear a step, dear Madam; it is Cæsar's.
This place is public, haste to your apartments.
There you in private may converse together.

Scene 3.

TITUS, PAULINUS, ATTENDANTS.

TITUS.

Do what you can to soothe the Queen, Paulinus;
Tell her I'm coming.

I would be alone

A moment. Let them leave me.

PAULINUS (*aside*).

How I fear

This conflict! May the gods protect his glory,
And Rome's! I'll see the Queen.

Scene 4.

TITUS.

What dost thou, Titus?

How rash art thou, thus to seek Berenice !
Art thou prepared to take a last farewell ?
And is thine heart steel'd to such cruelty ?
For in the conflict that awaits thee now
Firmness is not enough, thou must be ruthless.
How shall I bear those eyes whose tender glance
Knows but too well the way to reach my heart ?
When I encounter that soul-piercing gaze
Fix'd upon mine, can I resist her tears,
Or bear in mind the stern behest of duty ?
How shall I say : " See me no more for ever ? "

I am about to stab a heart that loves me,
Beloved by me. And why ? At whose command ?
Mine own, for Rome has not declared her wishes.
I hear no cries surging around this palace,
Nor see the State hanging o'er ruin's brink.
Needs it a sacrifice like this to save it ?
Its voice is silent : I, my own tormentor,
Rush to meet troubles I may keep at bay.
Who knows but Rome, owning the Queen's rare virtues,
Will count her one of her own citizens ?
Rome by her choice may justify my own ;
I will not court destruction, no, not I.
Let Rome against her laws weigh in the balance
Such love as hers, such tears, such constancy,
And she will side with me—

Open thine eyes ;
What air is this that thou dost breathe ? Can love
Or fear eradicate the hate of Kings
That Romans with their mothers' milk imbibe ?
Their sentence against Kings condemns thy Queen.
Hast thou not heard it from thine earliest years ?
And even in the camp the voice of Fame
Proclaim'd thy duty in thine ears once more.

When Berenice hither follow'd thee,
 Rome did not fail to let thee know her judgment.
 How often must that judgment be repeated?
 Coward, let love prevail, renounce the throne,
 Seek Earth's remotest bounds, and, there confined,
 Resign to worthier hands the reins of empire.
 Is this the end then of those glorious projects
 Which were t' enshrine my memory in all hearts?
 Eight days have I been reigning, and till now
 Nought have I done for honour, all for love.
 What record can I give of time so precious?
 Where are the boons I led men to expect?
 The tears that I have dried? The happy eyes
 Wherein I read the fruit of kindly service?
 How have the burdens of the world been lighten
 What span of life to me has been allotted
 I know not; and how much of these few days,
 So long expected, have I lost already!
 Delay no longer: do what honour bids,
 And break the only tie—

Scene 5.

BERENICE, TITUS.

BERENICE (*coming from her apartment*).

Nay, let me go.
 Your counsel all is vain to keep me back;
 And I must see him—
 Ah, my lord, you here!
 Then it is true Titus abandons me!
 And we must part! 'Tis he will have it so!

TITUS.

Spare, Madam, to o'erwhelm a hapless prince.
 We must not melt each other's hearts with woes.
 I am consumed with cruel griefs enough
 Without the added torture of those tears.

Recall that noble spirit which so oft
Has made me recognize the voice of duty.
Yet there is time. Reduce your love to silence;
And, with an eye clear'd from the mists of passion,
Regard that duty with unflinching courage.
Strengthen this heart of mine against yourself,
Help me to nerve its weakness, if I can;
To keep back tears that will not cease to rise;
Or, if we cannot stanch those tender springs,
Let dignity at least support our woes,
So that the whole world without blame may mark
When weeps an Emperor and when weeps a Queen.
For, after all, my Princess, we must part.

BERENICE.

Ah, cruel Titus, you repent too late.
What have you done? You made me think you loved me,
Accustom'd me to see you with delight,
Till but for that I lived. You knew your laws
When first you brought me to such fond confession,
Why did you let my love grow to this height?
Why said you not: "Poor Princess, fix your heart
Elsewhere, nor let deceitful hopes ensnare it;
Give it to one free to accept the gift?"
You took it gladly, will you now reject it
With cruel scorn, when to your own it clings?
How oft did all the world conspire against us!
Still there was time, you should have left me then.
A thousand reasons might have soothed my woe;
I might have blamed your father for my death,
The senate, and the people, all the empire,
The whole world, rather than a hand so dear.
Their enmity, so long declared against me,
Had long prepared me to expect misfortune.
I did not look, Sir, for this cruel blow
To fall when hope seem'd crown'd with happiness,
Now, when your love can do what'er it wishes,
When Rome is silent, and your father dead,
When all the world bends humbly at your knees,
When there is nothing left to fear but you.

TITUS. •

Yes, it is I who wreak my own destruction!
Till now I lived the victim of delusion,
My heart refused to look into the future,
To think that we might one day have to part.
To eager wishes nothing seems too hard,
And blinded hope grasps the impossible.
Haply I thought to die before your eyes,
And so forestall more cruel separation.
All opposition made my flame burn brighter;
Rome and the empire spoke, but glory's voice
Not yet had to my heart appeal'd in tones
Like those with which it strikes an Emperor's ears.
I know what torments wait on this resolve,
I feel my heart ready to take its flight,
I cannot any longer live without you.
Come life or death, my duty is to reign.

BERENICE.

Be cruel, then, and reign, a slave to glory!
I'm ready to submit. Yes, I expected,
For trusting you, to hear those lips, that swore
A thousand vows of everlasting love,
Confess before mine eyes that they were faithless,
And banish me for ever from your presence.
I wish'd to hear that sentence from yourself;
But I will hear no more. Farewell for ever—
For ever! Ah, my lord, think how those words,
Those cruel words, dismay a heart that loves!
A year, a month will be to us an age
Of suffering, when the wide sea rolls between us,
And each fresh sun that dawns shall sink in darkness
Without presenting to the eyes of Titus
His Berenice, he unseen by her
The livelong day. But how am I deceived!
No sorrow feels he at the thought of absence,
He will not count the days when I am gone,
So long to me, they'll seem too short for him!

TITUS.

They'll not be many I shall have to count:
I hope ere long the tidings of my death
Will bring assurance that I loved you truly.
Then you will own that Titus could not live—

BERENICE.

Ah, my dear lord, why part if that be so?
I speak not now to you of happy marriage.
Has Rome condemn'd me never more to see you?
Why grudge to me the selfsame air you breathe?

TITUS.

I can't resist you, Madam. Stay, I yield;
But not without a sense of mine own weakness;
Ceaseless must be the conflict and the fears,
Ceaseless the watch to keep my steps from you,
Whose charms will ever like a magnet draw me.
Ay, at this very instant, love distracts me
From memory of all things but itself.

BERENICE.

Well, well, my lord, what ill can come of it?
Where see you any sign of Rome's displeasure?

TITUS.

Who knows how they will look on this offence?
If they complain, if cries succeed to murmurs,
Must I shed blood to justify my choice?
If they in silence let me break their laws,
To what do you expose me? I must purchase
Their patience at the price of base compliance
With whatsoever else they dare to ask me;
Too weak to enforce the laws I cannot keep.

BERENICE.

You count as nothing Berenice's tears!

TITUS. . .

I count them nothing! Heavens! What injustice!

BERENICE.

Why then, for unjust laws that you can change,
O'erwhelm yourself in ceaseless miseries?
Have you no rights, my lord, as well as Rome?
Why should you hold her interests, more sacred
Than ours? Come, tell me

TITUS.

How you read my heart

BERENICE

You are the Emperor, and yet you weep?

TITUS.

Yes, Madam, it is true, with sighs and tears
I am unnerved But when the throne I mounted
Rome made me swear to vindicate her laws,
And I must keep them. More than once already
Her rulers have been call'd on to display
Their constancy in trial. From her birth
Those whom she honour'd readily obey'd her:
See Regulus who, faithful unto death,
Return'd to Carthage to be slain with tortures,
Torquatus dooming his victorious offspring,
Brutus with tearless eyes seeing his sons
Slain by his orders 'neath the lictor's axe.
Hard lot was theirs! But patriotic duty
Has ever won the victory with Romans.
I know in leaving you unhappy Titus
Attempts what throws their virtues in the shade,
A sacrifice surpassing any other's:
But think you, after all, I am unworthy
To leave posterity a high example
Which those who follow will be task'd to equal?

BERENICE.

No! To your cruel heart I deem it easy;
Worthy are you to rob me of my life.
The veil is torn aside, I read your heart.
I will not ask you more, to let me stay,—
Me, who had willingly endured the shame
Of ridicule and scorn from those who hate me.
I wish'd to drive you to this harsh refusal.
'Tis done, and soon you'll have no more to fear me.
Think not that I shall vent my wrongs in fury,
Or call on Heav'n to punish perjury:
No, if a wretch's tears still move the gods,
I pray them to forget the pangs I suffer.
If, ere I die, victim of your injustice,
I cherish any wish to leave behind me
Avengers of poor Berenice's death,
I need but seek them in your cruel heart;
Remorse will dwell there, all my love recalling.
Paint my past kindness, and my present anguish,
Show you my blood staining your royal palace,
And haunt you with abiding memories:
I have made every effort to dissuade you,
'Tis vain: to your own heart I trust for vengeance.
Farewell.

Scene 6.

TITUS, PAULINUS.

PAULINUS.

What seem'd her purpose when she left you?
Is she disposed, my lord, to go away?

TITUS.

I am undone, Paulinus! She is bent
On self-destruction. How should I survive it?
Haste, let us follow her!

PAULINUS.

Did you not order,
Just now, that all her movements should be watch'd?
Her women are not backward in their duty,
And they will turn her from these gloomy thoughts.
Fear nothing. This is her last throw, my lord;
With perseverance victory is yours.
I know you could not hear her without pity,
I was myself affected at the sight.
But take a wider and more distant view,
Think how a moment's pain will lead to glory,
With what applause the universe will ring,
Rank'd in the future—

TITUS.

No, I am a monster.
I hate myself. Nero, by all detested,
Ne'er reach'd a depth of cruelty like this.
I will not let poor Berenice die.
Come, let us go, and Rome say what she will.

PAULINUS.

My lord!

TITUS.

I know not what I say, Paulinus;
Excess of sorrow overpow'rs my senses.

PAULINUS.

Soil not the current of your pure renown:
The news, already spread, of your farewell
Makes Rome exchange her sighs for shouts of triumph;
In all her temples fumes of incense rise
For you, your virtues to the skies are lauded,
And everywhere your statues crown'd with bays.

TITUS.

Ah, Rome! Ah, Berenice! Woe is me,
That I should be an Emperor, and a lover!

Scene 7.

TITUS, ANTIOCHUS, PAULINUS, ARSACES.

ANTIOCHUS.

What have you done, my lord? The lovely Queen
Lies in Phœnix's arms, death hovering o'er her:
Deaf to our tears, to counsel, and to reason,
She cries aloud for daggers or for poison.
You, you alone can tear that longing from her—
For when they breathe your name her life comes back;
Her eyes are ever turn'd to your apartments,
As tho' they look'd to see you every moment.
The sight is more than I can bear, it kills me.
Go, show yourself to her. Why tarry longer?
Save to the world such virtue and such beauty,
Or waive all title to humanity.
Speak but one word.

TITUS.

Alas! What can I say?
I scarcely know if I'm alive or dead.

Scene 8.

TITUS, ANTIOCHUS, PAULINUS, ARSACES, RUTILUS.

RUTILUS.

My lord, the senate, consuls, all the tribunes
Seek audience of you in the name of Rome:
With them a multitude, full of impatience,
Throng your apartments, and await your presence.

TITUS.

Great gods, ye thus would reassure my heart,
Distracted as ye see till like to break!

PAULINUS. *

Come, Sire, and let us pass to the next chamber.
There see the senate.

ANTIOCHUS.

Haste, Sir, to the Queen!

PAULINUS.

Nay, treat them not with such indignity,
Nor trample on the majesty of Rome,
Whose envoys—

TITUS.

'Tis enough. Yes, I will see them.
(to ANTIOCHUS.)

Prince, 'tis a duty that I cannot shun.
Go to the Queen. I hope, on my return,
She will no longer need to doubt my love.

ACT V.

Scene 1.

ARSACES.

Where shall I find this Prince of peerless faith?
May Heav'n conduct my steps, and aid my zeal:
Grant me this moment to announce to him
A happiness which he has ceased to hope for!

Scene 2.

ANTIOCHUS, ARSACES.

ARSACES.

Ah! What good fortune sends you hither, Sire?

ANTIOCHUS.

If my return can bring you any joy,
It is to my despair your thanks are due.

ARSACES.

My lord, the Queen goes hence.

ANTIOCHUS.

She goes!

ARSACES.

To-night,

Her orders have been giv'n. She is offended
That Titus leaves her to her tears so long
Her passion has cool'd down to proud displeasure;
Rome and the Emp'ror she alike renounces,
And wishes to be gone ere Rome can learn
Her trouble, and rejoice to see her flight.
She writes to Cæsar.

ANTIOCHUS.

Heavens! Who'd have thought it?

And Titus?

ARSACES.

Has not met her eyes again.
The multitude in transport press around him,
Shouting his praises and the names of honour
The senate have conferr'd, and these loud plaudits,
These titles, and these tokens of respect
To Titus seem so many binding pledges,
Links in a chain to fix his wavering will,
Despite his sighs and Berenice's tears.
I think he will not see her more. All's over.

ANTIOCHUS.

I feel fresh hope; I own it, Arsaces.
But cruel Fate has oftentimes play'd me false,
And mock'd me with such bitter disappointments,

That 'tis with fear and trembling that I hear you :
Evil forebodings mingle with my joy,
And make me dread the turn of Fortune's wheel.
But who is this ? Titus is coming hither !
With what intent ?

Scene 3.

TITUS, ANTIOCHUS, ABSACES.

TITUS (*to his Attendants*).

Stay, let none follow me.

(*to ANTIOCHUS.*)

I come at last, Prince, to redeem my promise.
The Queen's distress engrosses all my thoughts,
Her tears and yours have pierced me to the heart ;
I come to calm sorrows than mine less cruel.
Come, Prince ; I would that you yourself should see
For the last time if I love Berenice.

Scene 4.

ANTIOCHUS, ABSACES.

ANTIOCHUS.

Thus ends the hope, then, that you came to offer !
You see the triumph that awaited me !
Justly incensed was Berenice leaving,
For Titus had refused to see her more !
Great gods ! What have I done, that thus misfortune
Is destined to pursue me all my life ?
My days are pass'd in constant quick transition
From fear to hope. from hope to wild despair.
Yet still I breathe ! O Berenice ! Titus !
Ah, cruel gods ! ye shall no longer mock me.

Scene 5.

TITUS, BERENICE, PHœNICE.

BERENICE.

Nay, I'll hear nothing. I am quite resolved:
I mean to go. *Why show yourself before me?
Why come you to embitter hopeless sorrow?
Are you not yet content? No more I'll see you.

TITUS.

Pray hear me.

BERENICE.

No, the time is past.

TITUS.

Dear Madam,

One word.

BERENICE.

Not one.

TITUS.

Into what grief she casts me!
Whence comes, my Princess, this so sudden change?

BERENICE.

You said you wish'd me to depart to-morrow;
I am determin'd to depart this moment:
The die is cast; I go.

TITUS.

Stay.

BERENICE.

Why, forsooth?
To hear myself insulted everywhere,
My trouble made the theme of every tongue?
Can you not hear their cries of cruel joy,

While I am drown'd in tears of lonely sorrow?
What have I done to make myself so hated?
No crime I know save loving you too much.

TITUS.

Why heed the malice of a senseless mob?

BERENICE.

Nought see I here but sights that wound mine eyes.
This chamber furnish'd by your thoughtful care,
These walls so long the witness of my love,
All seem'd to pledge that yours would last for ever;
These garlands, where our names close link'd together
Meet my sad gaze whene'er I look around,
Are more than I can bear, smiling impostors!
Phœnice, let us go.

TITUS.

Heav'ns! How unjust!

BERENICE.

Return, return to that august assembly
Which welcomes with applause your cruelty.
Say, did their praises gratify your ear?
Was your fierce thirst for glory fully slaked?
Confess that you have promised to forget me.
But that would not suffice to seal repentance:
Have you not sworn an everlasting hatred?

TITUS.

Nay, I have promised nothing. Hatred, say you?
How can I e'er forget my Berenice?
Gods! What a bitter moment thus to feel
Crush'd 'neath the weight of her unjust suspicion!
Ah, you should know me better. Count the hours,
The days I spent, these five years past, in telling
My heart's desires with passion that outran
Your own, and fervent sighs when words were dumb.

This day surpasses all. Ne'er, I protest,
Were you beloved with so much tenderness;
Ay, and for ever—

BERENICE.

You maintain you love me;
Yet I'm departing, and by your command!
Find you such charms, my lord, in my despair?
Fear you that these mine eyes shed tears too few?
What boots it that your heart returns so late?
For pity's sake at least show me less love,
Recall not an idea too fondly cherish'd;
Let me go hence, persuaded that, already
Banish'd in secret from your soul, I leave
A wretch who loses me without regret.

(TITUS reads a letter.)

The letter you have seized I had just written.
There you may read all that of you I ask,
And of your love: read it, and let me go.

TITUS.

Nay, that you never shall with my consent.
What! this departure then was but a scheme
Veiling more cruel purpose! You would die!
So should there but remain sad memories
Of all I love.

Go, call Antiochus.

(BERENICE sinks upon a seat.)

Scene 6.

TITUS, BERENICE.

TITUS.

Madam, a true confession I must make.
Whilst my mind brooded on that dreaded moment
When, in obedience to stern laws of duty,

I should be forced to see your face no longer ;
When I foresaw that sad farewell approaching,
Contending fears in me, from you rebuke
Of tearful eyes, I arm'd my soul to suffer
All that affliction most intense could bring me :
But I must own that e'en my worst forebodings
Fell short, far short of the reality ;
I thought my courage was less prone to yield,
And feel with shame how feeble was its strength.
Before mine eyes I saw all Rome assembled ;
The senate spoke, but my distracted soul
Heard without comprehending, and in silence,
As cold as ice, I met their warmest greetings.
Rome knows not yet what destiny awaits you ;
I scarcely know myself if at this moment
I am an Emperor, or e'en a Roman.
Uncertain of my purpose, I am come,
Drawn hither by my love, where, peradventure,
Self-consciousness may to my soul return.
What have I found ? Death pictured in your eyes.
In search of death I see you mean to leave me.
At this sad prospect I'm o'erwhelm'd with anguish,
The devastating flood has reach'd its height,
The worst that man can feel 'tis mine to suffer.
Nay, not the worst ; I see a way of rescue.
Yet hope not for a refuge from these terrors
In happy wedlock that may dry these tears :
Tho' sore the straits to which I am reduced,
Glory asserts inexorable claims,
And evermore reminds me that our marriage
Is incompatible with sovereignty,
That, after all the fame I sought and won,
'Tis less than ever meet that I should wed you,
That I, dear Madam, should declare me ready
For you the throne of empire to resign,
To follow you and, going, hug my chains,
To breathe forth amorous sighs in realms remote.
You would yourself blush at such feeble conduct,
And see with shame an Emperor so unworthy
As humbly to attach himself to you,
Forfeit his crown, and make himself a mark

For all men's scorn. To 'scape my present torments
There is, you know it well, a nobler way ;
Many a hero, many a son of Rome
Has shown me, Madam, how to tread that path ;
When constant woes have wearied out their patience,
Fate's ceaseless persecution has to them
Seem'd like a secret order from on high
No longer to resist. If still your tears
Reproach me when I look on Berenice,
If I behold you still resolved to die,
If I must ever tremble for your life, • •
Unless your solemn oath this fear removes,
You will have other tears to shed ere long.
My present strait prompts me to desperate deeds,
Nor can I answer for it that my hand
May not with blood seal our last sad farewell.

BERENICE.

Alas !

TITUS.

What is there that I dare not do !
See how my fate rests wholly in your hands ;
Ponder it well, and if I still am dear—

Scene 7.

TITUS, BERENICE, ANTIOCHUS.

TITUS.

You're welcome, Prince, I sent to bid you come.
Be witness of the weakness of my heart ;
Judge whether with too little tenderness
It loves.

ANTIOCHUS.

I doubt it not ; I know you both ;
Know in your turn what misery is mine.
You, Sire, have honour'd me with your regard,

And I can here assure you without falsehood,
 I have competed with your dearest friends,
 And shed my blood, to hold the foremost place.
 The Queen and you, my lord, have both confided
 Your mutual love to me, against my will:
 She hears me and can say if I speak truth,
 She ever saw me eager in your praises,
 Well I responded to your confidence.
 You owe me thanks, ay, more than you suppose,
 For little you imagine at this moment
 That such a faithful friend was yet your rival.

TITUS.

My rival!

ANTIOCHUS.

Listen to my explanation.
 This heart has ever worshipp'd Berenice;
 A hundred times I struggled to forget her,
 In vain, but not in vain to make my love
 Seem dead. When I was flatter'd with the signs
 Of change in you, new hopes within me rose.
 But Berenice's tears those hopes have quench'd:
 With weeping eyes she begg'd that she might see you.
 And, as you know, I summon'd you myself.
 You have return'd to her beloved and loving,
 The breach between you heal'd, I cannot doubt it.
 In final consultation with my heart,
 I have resolved to test its utmost courage,
 And Reason has resumed her sovereign sway.
 I never loved her more than at this moment,
 But one strong effort may effect my freedom;
 To death I fly for succour, which alone
 Can burst my bonds. This is what I desired
 To tell you. I recall'd him to you, Madam,
 Nor do I now repent what I have done.
 May Heav'n pour forth its blessings in rich store
 On all your future years, link'd each to other
 By happiness! Or, if its wrath still threatens
 A life so precious, I implore the gods

To turn it all on this devoted head,
And consummate my sacrifice for you.

BERENICE (*rising*).

Cease, Princes, cease. This generosity
Is more than I can bear and drives me mad!
Where'er I look, whether on you or him,
I meet the very image of despair,
Eyes full of tears, and lips that utter nought
But words of horror and impending bloodshed.

(*to* TITUS.)

My lord, you know my heart, and I am bold
To say I never sigh'd to be an Empress.
Rome's grandeur and the purple of her Cæsars
Could not attract the gaze of Berenice.
My love was all for you, your love alone
My heart's desire; and, when I thought to-day
That I had lost it, 'twas with wild alarm.
I know my error now, you never ceased
To love me. I have seen your deep emotion,
Your heart is troubled more than I deserve.
Let not your love eclipse "the World's Delight,"
Nor rob her of yourself just at the time
When the first taste of your transcendent virtues
Allures her hopes. For five years I have wish'd
To prove to you how faithful is my love;
Now must a crowning effort seal devotion,
Your will shall be obey'd and I will live.
Reign, noble Cæsar! Berenice bids
Adieu to you for ever.

(*to* ANTIOCHUS.)

Prince, this parting
May well convince you that no other passion
(Tho' far I go from Rome) can e'er supplant
My love for Titus. Do as we have done,
In generous self-conquest vie with us
Who tear asunder our united hearts.
Live, and, if sigh you must, let it be far
From Berenice. Fare you well.

We three

Shall offer to the world the saddest instance
In History's page of fond affections blighted.
My bark is ready. Do not follow me.
(to TITUS.)
For the last time, farewell, my lord.

ANTIOCHUS.

Alas!

END OF VOL. I.

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